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Urban Signs/Signs of the Urban: Of Scenes and Streetscapes

By Geoff Stahl

The window on the street is not a mental place from which the interior gaze would be following abstract perspectives. A practical site, private and concrete, the window offers views that are more than spectacles. Perspectives which are mentally prolonged so that the implication of this spectacle carries its explanation. Familiarity preserves it as it disappears and is reborn, with the everyday life of inside and out. Opacity and horizons, obstacles and perspectives are implicated, for they become complicated, imbricate themselves to the point of allowing the Unknown, the giant city, to be perceived or guessed at. With its diverse spaces affected by diverse temporalities—rhythms. (Henri Lefebvre 1996: 224)

Let me set the scene for this thematic section of *Culture Unbound*, a collection of essays dedicated to signs in the city/city of signs, by drawing on a personal reflection on aspects of two streets I've lived on: Montréal's Boulevard St. Laurent and Berlin's Kastanienallee. In both cases, they speak to issues that are germane to the semiotic power of the city, and do so in ways that frame many of the issues this section explores in number of different ways.

Between 1997 and 2003, I lived on Blvd St. Laurent, the "Main", just north of Pine Ave, which put me at the lower end of the Montréal's renowned Plateau. For those unaware of this part of Montréal, this particular intersection can be read as a symbolic and material incarnation of the social and economic life in Montréal for a number of reasons. During that time, the shape of the neighbourhood changed gradually but dramatically. I witnessed these changes through my office window, from which I could gaze down onto St. Laurent. From there, I watched the steady rotation of shops, with old stores replaced by new restaurants, discount computer shops, book stores, and clothing shops. I lived in an area (briefly) nicknamed "Little Asia", an appellation that referred to the many Asian fast food joints that had appeared on the Main in recent years. Some people lament the disappearance of the mom and pop shops, delis, kitchenware stores, and bakeries while others see a street reinvigorated by new waves of immigrant entrepreneurs which have moved in to stake their claim to the mythical promise the Main has consistently offered newcomers to the city. Whether negative or positive, these sentiments reiterate the rich history inscribed into the both the built and imaginary landscape of St. Laurent.

From my vantage point, further lingering over the streetscape gave up more evidence of the changes begin wrought on the Main. Although I couldn't see them from my window, the three buildings just south of where I lived spoke to the street's history and its myths as well. Abandoned as apartments, their first floors--

all commercial spaces--eked out an existence that seemed astoundingly resilient given the apparent lack of interest in their wares. The apartment directly adjacent to mine was, when I moved in, a punk squat, its first floor occupied by an antique dealer. About ten years ago, it was renovated, the punks had to find a new home and the first floor has since become a jewellery shop. Two doors down was the Pecker Brothers' kitchenware store, a modest yet cluttered shop filled from floor to ceiling with poppy seed grinders, teakettles, mops, espresso makers, and other sundry domestic items, many of which catered to the European shop owners who used to be regular customers. When Louis Pecker, the last surviving brother and a man who would gladly regale you with stories of life on the Main during the thirties, retired in 2001, rumours of renovation and condo conversion circulated rapidly among the neighbours (which proved to be true). Some years ago, three doors down, above the now-defunct Mr. Falafel, with its iconic neon sign, the two-storey apartment abandoned for nearly twenty-five years was gutted by fire, the result of the ad hoc wiring used to electrify a marijuana "grow room" (run by yet more squatters). These and other changes are often read as signs, portents some would say, of things to come for the Main.

After living on St. Laurent, I moved to Prenzlauerberg in Berlin's former East, where I settled onto a remarkably similar street. I lived for a year on Kastanienalle, once a modest residential strip, but a street that has lately come to symbolize the strength and vitality of the city's cultural, entrepreneurial economy. From this new window, I could see the goings on at the gallery across the street, the bar life on Schwedter Str., and catch the city's fashion parade as young people came and went from local bars, cafés, *flohmarkts* (fleamarkets), and second-hand shops. My room was in an old set of flats, the neighbours, former East Berliners (often called *Ossis*, or "Easterners") who could sometimes be seen peering out onto the street, in seeming awe of the pace of its almost daily transformation. Many of the other neighbours were involved in the city's vibrant cultural life, running record labels, offering graphic design services, curating gallery shows, or making art and music, such that the building itself seemed to house a microcosm of the competing and complementary life stories and living ideologies found in post-Wall Berlin. Even in its layout, the building spoke to the diversity of the street and by extension the city. The *Hinterhof*, the rear section of the *Mietzkaserne* which formed the other side of the building's courtyard, was home to an odd religious group, who performed shadowy ceremonies on select evenings. In the front, the cycles of the city's entrepreneurial economy played out in the café below and the tiny shop directly beneath my room, changing hands a number of times in the brief period I was there, the shop transforming itself from tiny record shop, to a craft shop and most recently to a Vespa store (which it remains). Next door, on the ground floor still sits a brothel, nestled next to an Asian *Imbiss*. To this day, new and used record shops sit alongside cafés that neighbour industrial design shops which bump up against galleries that sandwich the few remaining

squats, a density of activity exemplifying the furtive spirit of entrepreneurial capitalism (and resistance to it) that has marked Berlin for nearly two decades after the fall of the Wall.

In this respect and others, Kastanienallee and St. Laurent provide the space in which large and small-scale histories entwine to give spatial and social expression to the distinctive sensibilities of their home cities. It is possible to frame many of the stories found on the Main and Kastanienallee as parables which resonate with a similar affective charge, edifying tales that tell us about the resilience of the immigrant entrepreneur, the travails of up-and-coming designers, the tenacious story of French/English or the tensions found in lingering Communist/Capitalist relationships, or, more pointedly, the economic ups and downs of both Montréal and Berlin in which the figure of the divide exerts. In different ways, these two streets are emblematic of the social and cultural life of each city. St. Laurent, for example, while it has historically served as the major immigrant corridor in Montréal, also houses a number of cultural institutions (S.A.T., Musée Juste Pour Rire), performance spaces (Cabaret, Jupiter Room, Barfly, La Sala Rosa, Casa del Popolo, among others) and acts as one of the city's primary channels for cultural promotion, with the street's mailboxes, lampposts, abandoned store fronts and sundry blank spaces thickly layered with handbills and posters advertising a range of cultural events, from music to theatre to films to book launches, among others (Allor 1997).

By contrast, Kastanienallee has a more modest history. It originated out of a vineyard, and ran through what was once a modest residential portion of Prenzlauerberg and part of neighbouring Mitte. It played host to cultural institutions as well: the German cinema pioneers the Skladanowsky brothers aired some of their early movie projections here, just prior to the Lumière brothers in Paris, metres away from one of the Prater *Biergarten*, one of the city's oldest which itself sits alongside well-established theatres, communes, etc. It was the main artery during the latter part of the twentieth century that cut through the GDR's bohemian and political underground, housing dissident presses as well as facilitating tales of Stasi intrigue and acts of terror (Brady and Wallace 1995; Boyer 2001). After the *Wende*, it became, along with neighbouring Mitte, a febrile site of renewal, as thousands of young Germans, Europeans and others moved in to colonize empty and abandoned spaces (many vacated by East Berliners forced out due to retrenchment and outward push of industry), and not long after the Wall came down, it was singled out as a site for gentrification by the city of Berlin. Prenzlauerberg as a whole was subjected to a staggered process of renovation that has gradually seen many of the neighbourhood's bullet-ridden facades give way to pastel-hued *Mietzkasernes* (Strom 2001). This vigorous renewal finds an analogue in its young and educated population, as the area has one of the highest birth rates in all of Europe and plays host to many students, artists and entrepreneurs, and wears its fecund youthfulness ostentatiously. Vestiges of socially progressive poli-

tics persist in what few squats remain on the street (one of the most tenacious, 68 Kastanienallee, has been embroiled in legal battles regarding occupancy; the anarchist bar, Morgenrot, is another site of communal activity with music and cheap vegetarian/vegan food), but its current guise is as a polyglot commercial strip, dotted with design stores, cafés, bars, second-hand clothing and record shops and restaurants, well-trod with tourists from around Europe and elsewhere, a shining symbol of the “New Berlin” as cultural consumer’s paradise (Till 2005; Binder and Niedermüller 2006).

These narratives of decline, rejuvenation, renovation and gentrification are hardly stories indigenous to Montréal or Berlin; any city will tell these tales. What is perhaps more significant about these particular streets is their semiotic value as repositories of unique histories and experiences which have left their traces on each. Their nicknames are worth noting in this respect: St. Laurent is “The Main”; Kastanienallee is “Casting Alley”. St. Laurent and Kastanienallee can be figured as temporal and spatial junctures that tell unique tales about Montréal or Berlin, sites at which numerous trajectories, narratives and biographies meet to produce an area dense with social, temporal and spatial significance for the “giant city”, as Lefebvre suggests. The Main, for instance, instantiates and concretizes a number of aspects of social, political, economic and imaginative dimensions of life in Montréal. Martin Allor has described St. Laurent as a chronotope, following from Bakhtin, a text through which can be read “the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented” (Allor 1997: 46). He suggests “the Main can be read as both a central production of the past and present politics *l’identitaire* of Montréal and as a way of specifying questions of the politics of place...” (ibid.). More pointedly, Allor claims that

(t)he places and practices of cultural activity on the Main can function as an exemplar of the relations between the private and the public, the local and the global. Indeed, Augé’s oxymoron of intimate alterity should ideally sit alongside Raymond Williams’ own oxymoron of mobile privatization as a naming of the structure of feeling of leisure-cultural activity. (51)

The street’s structure of feeling is evident at the intersection of Ave. des Pins and St. Laurent, where with a studied gaze one can discern in the hustle and bustle the competing and complementary rhythms that characterize the social life and underpin the broader urban ambiance of Montréal. The built environment and commercial life reveal the economic cycles of Montréal, as do the periodic movements of immigrants who have left countless traces along the Main. Alongside St. Laurent’s Arab fruit stand, the Hungarian bakery, the Spanish grocer, the hammock store, the Slovenian deli, the dance clubs, cafés, the piercing and tattoo salon, the Thai take-away, and the noodle shops, you could find here examples of what Lefebvre notes are cyclical and linear rhythms of street life. The cyclical, he suggests, is “social organization manifesting itself”, and the linear is “routine, thus the perpetual, made up of chance and encounters” (Lefebvre 1996: 222). The micronarratives of everyday life bump up against the metanarratives of the many

histories found on St. Laurent, a productive tension that allows the Main to serve as an index of the city's exuberant night life, a barometer of its economic state, as well as a measure of its cultural vitality. In all of this, one can find on the Main the complex layering of the rhythms that underscore the variegated tenor of Montréal's cultural and social life taking the form of myriad scenes, extending from well-worn bar to flashy café, from august cultural institution to seedy nightclub.

Berlin's Kastanienallee also lends itself to being read as a chronotope, a locus upon which "*l'identitaire*" of the city unfolds, where the twentieth century's ideological struggles have played themselves out in more dramatic and more quotidian forms, a site of local politics, resistance, and at points forced capitulation (consider the exodus of thousands of *Ossis*, due to job loss, for example). It is now the site also of a vibrant cultural scene, in which all that came before persists as a palimpsest upon which the current cultural economy of Berlin draws its semiotic force. Kastanienallee, in its role as "Casting Alley", is a significant locus for the city's new culturalized economy. Following from Lefebvre, I have suggested elsewhere, you can find here a street "where past and present narratives combine to produce a peculiarly urban arrhythmia". (Stahl 2007, 314). Not unlike St. Laurent, the undulations of entrepreneurial capitalism are clearly evident as part of the street's façade. A litany of shops, bars, restaurants, and cafés open and close with unfailing regularity, stops and starts that speak to larger cycles and histories and give the street what I have referred to as an "ectopic energy" (ibid.). Kastanienallee is a streetscape dotted with "visible acts of subcultural consumption", (ibid.) the social life of the street scene demonstrating what Blum refers to as being "private in public" (Blum 2003). The city's various scenes spill ostentatiously onto its sidewalks, their robustness barely contained by the many bars, restaurants, cafés, *Imbiss*, and shops that define the street's character.

In this capacity and others, scenes help to enunciate what Doreen Massey, following from Barthes, has referred to as a city's "cityness" (Massey, et al. 1999). This is a suggestive way to begin to think about the signifying power of the scene and its relation to the city. Recent work on scenes has attempted to redeem the social power of the scene as a cultural space that cultivates a certain orientation towards the city, to others, and to one's social well-being (Blum 2003; Stahl 2007, 2008; Straw 1991, 2004). While it is possible to read Kastanienallee's scenes as only so much "ornamentation", it would be disingenuous to render them as a wanton or useless, which is often how scenes are dismissed. There is a play of surfaces found in the scene, emphasizing at one level display and performance, gestures and qualities confirm the scene's more ostentatious impulses. However, following from Blum and Janet Ward (2001, 2004) who both engage with the long fascination with urban surfaces exemplified in the work of Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and others, the study of scenes can give way to more substantive urban issues. Framing scenes as spaces bereft of clear purpose and well-

defined politics ignores dimensions of scenic life that only serves to further diminish their social relation to the city:

(C)haracterizing it as only superficial, filled with the seductive pleasures found in its surface effects, only disparages scenes without getting at why they continue to erupt and effloresce in the way and the places that they do. The scene should not be read as an extraneous urban detail, as frivolous or as mere spectacle, as its detractors would have it, as though there were a truer, more authentic, way of being in the city. (Stahl 312: 2007)

The view that scenes are an effect born out of the dominant logic of capitalism that drives urban economies fails to address certain social facts. To read scenes and their signs in this way suggests, following from Blum, a reductive reading of cultural activity as a superfluous consequence of the larger economic imperatives of the city, a way of classing them as forms of “false consciousness”, thereby dismissing them as hollow crucibles for the misguided and alienated and where politics meets its inevitable attenuation (this is, in part, what Blum suggests Sharon Zukin’s work does; though the antidote does not necessarily reside in the bohemian indices put forward by Richard Florida (2005) either, for example). The rise over the past decade of the “creative city” gives scenes and issues regarding the culture of cities more salience (O’Connor and Wynne 1996; Scott 2000; Landry 2004). The significance, in a social, semiotic, economic and thus ideological sense, of scenes to cities that have come to rely upon entrepreneurial economies provides us with plenty of examples of the power of culture to sell cities, but also the cultural power borne by artists, entrepreneurs as avatars (and opponents) of neoliberalism (Hall 1997; Hannigan 2003; McRobbie 2004). Scenes in the “creative city” bear, as well as obscure, an ideological baggage in terms of their role in the instrumentalization of culture. We may well view scenes in this context as symptoms of the “creative city” in such a way that their real and imagined virtues and vices invite further analysis, able to enrich our readings of the cultural life of cities as it exists, for example, under new economic orders. The social power of the scenes flourishing on Kastanienallee and St. Laurent cannot be dismissed out of hand, in other words. What has been referred to as their semiotic excess and intensity point towards a complex set of relationships (Shank 1994; Straw 1991). This is a constellation bound up in attachments to place, and to others, as well as to cultural, social, aesthetic, economic and political practices which cannot be easily discounted in terms of their ability to ratify the diversity of individual and collective life possible in the city.

The streetscape and its numerous scenes remain an urban trope, topos and part of its typology that can be made to say a great deal about a city, its people, its histories and its culture. The socio-semiotic value of St. Laurent and Kastanienallee may also be better understood by putting them into relation with one another. There are social, material and symbolic resonances that allow contrast and comparison. This is not least because they often figure as centres of creative life in their respective national imaginaries. They can be thought about together through

the persistence and semiotic power of the figure of the divide. I have alluded to St. Laurent, for example, in its capacity to act not only as an immigrant corridor. Its more significant status is its iconic role as the divide between the city's west and east, which in the urban imaginary means Anglophone and Francophone, respectively; Kastanienallee represents the frontier of the New Berlin, where another kind of occupation unfolded, the triumph of Capitalism over Communism, the point where East meet West, *Ossi* meets *Wessi*, and where tensions and resolutions grand and small announce themselves every with decreasing frequency.

More to the point, as someone who has lived for various stretches of time in each city, I came to realize that living in Montréal was a good way to think about Berlin, and living in Berlin a good place to think about Montréal. We are inclined to think of places relationally, what's different or what's the same, as one way of testifying to our allegiance to this place over that, or as a means to help ameliorate our sense of longing for "home/*Heimat*" if away. Spending time in each city provoked thoughts of the other. The question of how to put these two streets and their cities into some sort of relationship that captures their unique urban identity cannot be easily reduced to a straight comparison. Each of these places is too large, too amorphous, too vast in scale, population and the product of profoundly different histories such that bringing them together for the purpose of comparison seems theoretically suspect and prone to truncations which do both Montréal and Berlin a disservice. As Blum has suggested, however,

we do compare cities: it is part of social life, a form of life. We compare cities, frequently, typically, and in many ways. The comparison of cities remains a popular activity. Should we say of such an activity that, while popular with the ignorant, it is inaccurate, or impossible, or dependent upon an illusion of mastery that can never be realized? (Blum 2007: 16)

We feel compelled to compare cities, constantly. As Johanne Sloane (2006) has suggested, we speak of cities in shorthand, and do it often by making appeals to pop sociologies, citing national surveys based on proliferating indices of lifestyle, affordability, culture, or claiming a stake in the intimacies born of local knowledge and experience of a city and its secrets. We think about them anecdotally, in fragments, through polling (quality of life, best bars, etc.), through their myths, skylines, icons, public transit, restaurant service, café culture, etc. They come back to us as characters in mediated forms, in newspapers, films, photographs, television shows, and the stories of others. Cities become signs of difference and similarity, resolving in some way into what Rolf Lindner (2007) has referred to as the "mythographies" native to any city, an elaborate web of cultural textures within which a city's population are enmeshed. As a semiotic gloss on the city, these textures serve to paradoxically elucidate and obscure city life. Streetscapes, monuments, bars, stores, etc., are made to matter, making up an urban lexicon that conjures up multifarious associations, memories, experiences, histories that together signal the city's distinctiveness. The signs of the city sediment out along local contours, and prove elusive and allusive in ways that further seduce us into

desiring much more of cities. More layers means more unveiling, the city experienced as a form of revelation. As streets like Kastanienallee and St. Laurent suggest, city signs and signs of the city coalesce to form an important part of the discursive prism refracting the mental and mattering maps through which we imagine, and live, in cities.

City of Signs/Signs of the City

What kind of meaning is connected to the city and by what kind of mechanisms?
(Martin Krampen 1979: 2)

What is the nature indissolubly, of the city as reality, as image, and as symbol?
(Hubert Damisch 2001: 19)

This special section of *Culture Unbound*: “City Signs/Signs of the City” is a collection of essays that deals with the semiotic push and pull of cities, or what Roland Barthes has referred to as the city’s “semantic force” (Barthes 1986: 91). It gathers together articles that deal with the city of signs and signs of the city, in the broadest sense of these terms. Each in their own way works through the city as a repository of signs and resident sign systems, as a signifying vehicle itself. As these essays attest, by virtue of its promiscuous generation of meaning the city has long existed as an object constituted by and constitutive of the modern gaze, a communicative device, social medium, and pole around which a diverse range of practices, meaningful acts and acts of meaning, can coalesce.

In terms of the contemporary city, with its shifting value, function and meaning, Lewis Mumford’s by-now famous rhetorical question “What is a city?” still resonates as a starting point when it comes to interrogating the city (Mumford 1996). The answer, or answers, can of course only ever be provisional, of the moment, and only provide insight into certain dimensions of city life. As many of these articles indicate, signification in the contemporary city has acquired a different kind of resonance, particularly around issues of culture, urban branding, policies, planning and development, heritage and histories, tourism, media forms, mediated spaces and technologies. This is such that Mumford’s question, and those posed by Damisch and Krampen above, are still germane to current debates, discussions and interrogations of urban culture, helping to enunciate in their own way what Alan Blum has referred to as the city’s “fundamental ambiguity” (Blum 2003).

While the authors gathered here do not address the topic of urban semiotics directly, this thematic section recalls some of the works collected by Mark Gottdiener and Alexander Lagopoulos’ *The City and the Sign* (1986). As an inspiration for this current section, this collection of seminal essays on urban semiotics offers a cogent, and critically reflective, foundation for the study of signs in the city. The work of Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, A. J. Greimas, and Raymond Ledrut, among others, forms the basis for what the editors refer to as a socio-semiotics of the city, in which power congeals into a range of sign systems, from monuments,

to street grids, advertising, film and literary representations, etc., media forms and practices dealt with in this collection: As Ledrut reminds us:

The city is a symbol, and there is symbolization of the city, but it is in the image itself, apprehended through and by discourse, that what the city represents for man (sic) is revealed and expressed, and that the city and its aspects are manifested in various figures, i.e., symbolized.... (Ledrut 1986: 223)

As a symbol system, the city and its images are produced, in Lefebvre's sense, according to a host of interests whereby denotative and connotative levels of signification are entwined and new species of urban mythologies, mythographies and place-images emerge (Lefebvre 1991, 1996; Lindner 2007; Shields 1991). These representations generate yet more valences, signifying practices flourishing in the city in what Lefebvre refers to as lived, conceived and perceived prisms, or, more specifically, as, experiential, imagined, and ideological frameworks (1991). Within these frameworks, and amid the busyness of urban semiosis, powerful vested interests and myriad practices of resistance work to encode, decode and recode the city's sign systems. Semiotics in this sense acts as an entry point for a focused ideological analysis, out of which can emerge a carefully considered examination of the city and its multifarious signifying practices and systems, aspects of signification tied to power, both top down and bottom up, that are taken up in the following essays.

Culture in the city is the primary object here: lived culture, cultural production, and the consumption of culture. Working through these miscellaneous dimensions of culture, material and symbolic, the authors included in this thematic section have provided a range of approaches to the semiotics of the city. Luc Pauwels offers the first foray into the city, via a photo essay that ruminates on the nature of urban discourse and signification. His semiotic reference points give us a consideration of the links and disconnects found between sociology and photography, two practices which are historically linked to the representation of the modern city. Pauwels provides a snapshot, many in fact, of the tension between detachment and investment in terms of how the city is framed as both utopia and dystopia.

Christopher Kelen's reflection on poetic representations of Macau grapples with the residues of Portuguese presence in China. As he notes, while generally not understood as a colony and more as an enclave, the ways in which space is represented and negotiated in a literary context are telling ones, and he draws upon Auge's notion of "non-place" to explore the distinction between what he calls "Macao space" and "anywhere space". The figures of the gambler and the beggar, as they come through in a selection of poems depicting urban life in Macau, Kelen uses as a preface to a discussion of the specificities of these spaces and the way in which they express a new order of consumption (of images, things, places).

A different, but related form of investment is considered in Sophie Esmann Andersen and Anne Ellerup Nielsen's conceptual framework, designed to address the

role of stakeholders in the city. For them, the way in which various stakeholders conceptualize the city helps to outline how certain vested interests, such as those tied up in policy making and politics, are founded through the elaboration of select relationships made between the different parties interested in shaping urban experience. This can be best exemplified as test case through the study of climate changes issues in Aarhus, Denmark, where it is suggested stakeholder theory can best grasp the complexity of urban networks and the various agents, institutions, groups and individuals which seek to utilize them to suit their purpose.

Christoph Jacke's piece, "Locating Intermediality: Socialization by Communication and Consumption in the Popular-Cultural Third Places of the Music Club and Football Stadium", draws upon Ray Oldenburg's idea of "third places". By this is meant spaces that facilitate sociability, in contrast to the shopping mall, or either sites that have a primary directive wedded to consumption over pure sociality. Jacke takes this term and applies it to the music club and football stadium, framing each as a site of communication *and* consumption, ripe with visual as well as verbal signifying gestures that complicate what might otherwise be what he refers to as a "culturally pessimistic" reading. Jacke offers a detailed analysis of these two spaces, noting that their transformation into sites of consumption as well as communication ensures that their social value is not entirely overwritten.

The nature of mediation and technologies in the city are taken up in various ways in a number of essays. The first of these, Jason Wasiak's "Being-in-the-City: A Phenomenological Approach to Technological Experience" uses Heidegger and others to consider the nature of technology, embodiment, mobility and the media in the city. The production, distribution and consumption of technology in the city are taken up through the framework of phenomenology. Wasiak argues that urban space is negotiated space, wherein a mass of technologies, a "technological ecology", is at work in ways that insist that "being-in-the-city" must be navigated in particular ways. He highlights, for example, the changing bodily relationship to urban space and mobility affected/effected by different modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and driving.

Martin Zellinger also deals with mobility, in the form of driving, walking and mass transit in the city, examining filmic representations of L.A in "'Quit Stalling...!': Destiny and Destination on L.A.'s Inner City Roads", albeit in addressing a different, but related, set of concerns. He considers the different takes on the legendary city found in Michael Mann's *Collateral* and Joel Schumacher's *Falling Down*. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Virilio, Baudrillard and others, Zellinger explores the tensions between state-based, controlled space versus the motorized discrete "liberated" individual, as played out in what we may well see as ironized and urbanized versions of the classic road movie.

Another form of urban mediation is dealt with in Yasmin Ibrahim's "City Under Siege: Narrating Mumbai Through Non-Stop Capture". Here she details the use of new media and technologies in the wake of the 2008 bombing of Mumbai.

The creation of a spectacle of terrorism in that country's film centre, responsible for producing hundreds of movies a year, is examined in relation to the elaboration of a "media event", utilizing Dayan and Katz's terminology. The interventions by members of the public countering the privileged spectacular reading of the event by the mainstream media, done through microblogging tools such as Twitter, create an alternative to the dominant readings put forward by the country's media conglomerates. The decentralized resemanticization of such an horrific event means that it takes on a different register for those on the ground, whose use of technology offers an important counterpoint to the monolithic, and preferred, reading produced for mainstream consumption.

Thinking about mediation of urban space on a different scale, Zlatan Krajina's article, "Exploring Urban Screens", looks at the phenomenon of ambient media, as manifest in a variety of urban screens in London. What he refers to as an "anthropology of illumination" guides part of his analysis of the way in which the proliferation of screens shapes city space. He suggests that "(u)rban space is a field of ever-complex spatial relations between its designers and users in a continuous interplay of continuity and flux". Urban screens are multi-purposed and take many different forms, a taxonomy explored by Krajina. Not unlike Wasiaak's reading of urban space and mobility, the way movement and experience can be guided according to the tensions found between public and private space in the city points to a spatial order governed by a logic fraught with competing interests and investments.

The monumental finds another analogue in the politics of cultural memory in Agata Lisiak's "Disposable and Usable Pasts in Central European Cities". She addresses the sometimes cavalier and often contested demolition or denigration of public monuments and institutions in Berlin and Warsaw. The erasure of histories is a loaded gesture in cities that are more prone to swoon at the novelty of corporate architecture than contend with the contradictions of history (Calle 1997; Huyssen 2003; Till 2005). The elision of unsavoury or problematic histories either through the renaming of streets or districts, or the transfiguration of Communist or Nazi-era buildings into contemporary institutions in post-Communist cities, does not entirely do away with their residual signifying power; instead, they take on the character of what Lisiak refers to as "urban palimpsests" and thus can persist in different, often troubling or unsettling, ways.

The thematic section is bookended with a final photo essay, taking us out of Europe to Australia, and at first glance away from the monumental via Megan Hicks' consideration of the symbolic role of pavement in the city as site of ad-hoc memorialisation. As a testament to lives lived, a place for eulogizing those who have recently died, the pavement in her article "City of Epitaphs" acts as another monumental figure in the city, albeit more prosaic in form and content. Pavement, she reminds us, can act as both "witness and accomplice to fatality", gaining another meaning as a site reclaimed for memorialisation. As an appropriative gesture

these kinds of memorials in the forms of graffiti sites, ad-hoc death notices and temporary shrines, Hicks contends, exist as markers of the inexorable drama that is the signature of city life.

This section of *Culture Unbound* represents a cross-section of the work being done around urban sign systems in a number of cities around the globe. The authors have presented articles that, directly and indirectly, grapple with what Gottdeiner and Lagapoulos have stated is the value of a socio-semiotic approach to the city, exploring “the articulation between semiotic and non-semiotic social processes in the ideological production and conception of space...” (14). From historical monuments to mobile technologies, from literary to filmic representations, from intimate reflections to theoretical engagements, and from immense outdoor screens to the ground beneath our pedestrian feet, these articles constitute a broad range of possibility with regard to reading the city of signs and signs of the city.

The final word on city signs and signs of the city can best be left with Roland Barthes. The amateur of the city he refers to here, he or she who loves cities, is, if I may speak for the authors here, us, writers and readers of the city. Barthes opens his essay on semiology and the city with a confession that this collection echoes in spirit:

But I should add that whoever would outline a semiotics of the city needs to be at the same time semiologist (specialist in signs), geographer, historian, planner, architect, and probably psychoanalyst. Since this is clearly not my case... the reflections that I am going to present to you are the reflections of an amateur in the etymological sense of this word: amateur of signs, he who loves signs; amateur of the city, he who loves the city. For I love both city and signs. And this double love (which is probably only one) leads me to believe... in the possibility of a semiotics of the city. (Barthes 1986: 89)

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Street Discourse: A Visual Essay on Urban Signification

By Luc Pauwels

The contemporary metropolis is the site where vast numbers of people live their lives in a forced or chosen context of collectivity, but one that allows for individuality and even loneliness (often stronger felt in a crowd). To many the metropolis is a site of limitless opportunity, of continual change and growth, a utopian place, a site of constant renewal. However in actual fact in often turns into a dystopia, a boulevard of broken dreams. For there is no place where everyone's desires can be met and there is no agreed upon state of completion of the utopian project. Cities constitute a constant "work in progress" of different actors with competing agenda's. Cities are the dynamic result of prior necessities and choices and present day re-articulations and revisions of those. Thus cities invariably testify of past dreams and options taken which amalgamate with present projects that reconstitute and reclaim a territory partially occupied by former social, cultural economic, political and religious forces. Some artifacts of the past are simply torn down and replaced but many remain and are re-imbued or re-infused with new meanings, or at the least reframed as a materialized memory of past events and ways of living.

Thus the present inscribes itself on the past, layer after layer, and in an asynchronous fashion. In this respect the city can be thought of as a palimpsest which is constantly being rewritten, repainted, and re-populated by hurried crowds with a purpose.

The day-to-day metabolism of the city may be observed through its artifacts which are as much materializations of norms and values and functions as objects that are constantly being uploaded with new meanings, or redefined or re-appropriated to fulfill new functions. But the social fabric also becomes apparent through routine behavior, incidents, major events and the various signs and symptoms of how the city is "used".

The city can be looked upon as a huge, out of control, syntagma, a combination of numerous paradigmatic choices made by many semi-independent actors, with different, often conflicting interests. Some signs have lost their meaning but remain to send their obsolete message (to buy a no longer existing product of an out of market manufacturer). These remnants of the past together with the uncontrolled combination of numerous signs that are competing for attention create a visual data overload and "noise" that may prove highly confusing, while at the same time they may become a source of entertainment for the attentive observer.

Cities are genuine hubs of cultural expression and unusually rich exponents of visual culture. The ongoing process of urbanisation goes hand in hand with a growing diversity of functions and people. Urban (visual) cultures emerge from human imagination, ambitions and desires, numerous intentional and unintentional choices, concerted and rival actions. Buildings, streets, squares, parks, monuments, shopping malls and other urban artefacts – the new, the long-established or those that barely survive – eloquently testify to past and present ways of thinking and doing, and together with the multi-formed activities of its inhabitants and visitors constitute the complex human and material fabric of the city.

Cities serve numerous practical, functional, symbolic, ritual and ideological ends. Many of which have an undeniable visual dimension. Therefore the city can be literally looked at from different angles that often refer to different orders of signification: the use of space, the types, means and degree of control, mobility, fashion, cultural diversity, entertainment, tourism, commerce, personal, interpersonal and group behaviour, the public and the private sphere. Much of this materializes in numerous artefacts and behaviours. Cities are both emanations, and reproducers, of power and control. They are sites of planning, control and conformism. Yet at the same time the urban context is a token and a breeding ground for resistance, for loss of control, for renewal, for deliverance. These multiple intermeshing discourses – the historic, the political, the social, the multicultural, the commercial, the religious etc. – provide the city its unpredictable, multilayered, never fully graspable, character. Therefore cities constitute at once a battle field for conflicting interests, a playground of ideas and a theatre for our senses, orchestrated by different agents with different temporal referents and audiences in mind.

Reframing the City

Sociology and photography represent distinct "ways of looking" at society. But they are both about "making the familiar strange", about questioning the seemingly obvious and "reframing" it (as social facts or processes or visual statements). Theories tend to work like looking glasses or lenses with their typical distortions and aberrations, and theory driven observations and recordings may ultimately embody a true merger of the photographic with the sociological.

In an effort to read the plethora of signs, or to document and understand the awkward melting pot of messages that bombard the city dweller, photographers and visual researchers often record, in a more or less systematic manner, the various aspects of urban visual culture. Alternatively, they may focus on what is strange or edifying in its own right, or they may try to metaphorically reinforce, clarify, amplify or even try to twist (in a Situationist-like "détournement") the possible meanings of the "ante-photographic" event through the expressive choice of a

particular vantage point or moment, or by skillfully employing one of the many but often unnoticed parameters or signifiers of the representational apparatus (framing, optical effects, tonality, texture). The latter approach may yield new ways of looking, which may help to reveal and explore the borderlines of that which is inexplicable or even hard to imagine.

Photographers and social scientists are often torn between being a detached (sometimes cynical) observer/reporter and a person truly engaged and involved with the field of observation. They are also pulled between some expression of realism (the default expectation of photography) and the expression of a unique view or one that transcends the purely physical nature of the depicted (the default urge of an artist or a theoretician). However both reveal the city as a structure and an experience, and these two aspects do not necessarily exclude one another.

These brief comments and the accompanying photographs which make up this *visual essay* reflect some expressions of the hybrid culture of big cities. They are not only a visual account of the struggle between the past and the present but also between different societal functions and centers of power: economic; social, cultural, political, aesthetic, ecological. They are more than an objective documentation of those visual artifacts and processes but also an effort to remould the urban reality without touching it. The present visual essay seeks to present metonyms and metaphors for those human interactions that have left their marks deliberately or inadvertently in the urban context.



THE URBAN PANOPTICON / Los Angeles, USA



HITCHCOCK MEETS MCDONALD'S / Los Angeles, USA



THE RIGHT WAY / Minneapolis, USA



CRACKED IDEALS / Antwerp, Belgium



FRAMING CLASS / Southampton, UK



CROSSROAD OF DISCOURSES / Cabourg, France



PAST INTO THE PRESENT / Holocaust Monument, Boston, USA



URBAN JUNGLE / Potsdam, Germany



MATTERS OF THE HEART / San Francisco, USA



REIMAGED – REVIEWED / San Francisco, USA



COMMUTING / New York, USA



UPTOWN – DOWNTOWN / San Francisco, USA



UPWARD MOBILITY / New Orleans, USA



SILENT METROPOLIS / New Orleans, USA

All photographs by Luc Pauwels.

Going Begging: Casino Culture and its Contrasts as Revealed in the New Macao Poetry

By Christopher (Kit) Kelen

Abstract

Among the key themes of contemporary Macao poetry, chance and luck loom large, along with their figuration in Macao life through sites such as casinos and temples, through personae such as those of the gambler, the beggar, the prostitute. Macao as dot-on-the-map is likewise conceived as a site for all kinds of portal semiotics, as paradigm for cultural crossing and cultural shift. Macao may be regarded as a work enduring (in Brechtian terms) because it is unfinished. While this is a formula that could be notionally applied to any city, this view seems particularly apt given both the extraordinary pace of change in post-handover Macao (i.e. since 1999), and the present bubble-bursting effect of the 2008 “financial tsunami”.

Relating Augé’s conception of “non-places” to Eco’s notion of open (as opposed to closed) text, this paper observes that consciousness of place in contemporary Macao poetry appears to be dominated by two kinds of space, glossed here as “Macao space” and “anywhere space”. Macao space is uniquely of an historical moment and place, something culturally positioned; in anywhere space (e.g. inside of a casino or an airport) subjects are hailed by consumption-oriented reifications of putative universal value. The contemporary Macao poetry typically values Macao space and sees it as under threat from the “non-negotiable” space of culture that could be anywhere.

Interested in the paradoxes, ironies and hypocrisies inherent in the present-day culture, politics and international position of Macao, the new Macao poetry reveals a place-based poetics deeply concerned with Macao identity, its evolution and potentials.

Keywords: Macao, poetry, place, space

Going Begging – Casino Culture and its Contrasts as Revealed in the New Macao Poetry

Macao – dot on the map and longstanding east/west portal – serves as a poetic symbol. Macao, the old city in south China, is a well inhabited territory – and so a place of poetic witness. Tension between conceptions of place implied by the Platonic as opposed to the empirical city is evidenced in contemporary Macao poetry. It is with such tensions and with the symbolic qualities of the imagined place this paper is concerned. This essay deals with a number of key themes in Macao poetry today; among these chance and luck loom large, along with their figuration in Macao life through sites such as casinos and temples, through personae such as those of the gambler, the beggar, the prostitute. The method of the investigation is to bring pertinent theory (especially concerning the postmodern city and cinematic space) into play in the consideration of contemporary Macao poetry (written in English or translated from Chinese or Portuguese). The reason for focusing on poetry in this manner is that this medium of witness has been uniquely suited to the fashioning of a subtle and on-going critique of the way things are and the powers that be in Macao.

The “mountains” around Macao – the high hills seen from almost everywhere in Macao – are all in fact across the border, on what people in Macao call the Mainland (or *da lu* – the big land or *nei di* – the ground inside). These mountains do not belong to the territory; they are not controlled by Macao’s government. To get to them one must cross the border into China proper. These ranges are like the mountain backdrop of a Japanese garden – a convenient theft for aesthetic purposes. Macao’s mountains (some now windmill clad) are something borrowed by virtue of a vantage point. And yet surely a view is part of a place? Those high hills are a reminder that – for better and worse (richer and poorer, etc.) – Macao is a part of China.

Those mountains are only one of a number of local spatial illusions. Perhaps illusions of size are necessary to a place on Macao’s scale? The illusion of a sea is potent in this Pearl River port. And there is the illusion that Macao is an island, as demonstrated in Wong Man Fai’s 2005 poem, “I’m on an island”:

I’m on this island
I use my eyes to write about its stories
of course originally I planned to read it with my tongue
but now the story is not yet finished
because I can almost see my breath
when passing the alleys
one after another, the lost fear restrains
the songs in my throat

leaving my eyeballs prosthetic
and the net filled with blood
I'm constantly questioning
the island

AV & KK¹ (227)

Needless to say, Macao is not an island, or not simply, literally, an island. In geographic terms, it's a peninsula and two islands. It's part of China (PRC). It was possibly a Portuguese possession for four hundred and fifty years, though not really a colony – historians generally agree to call it an enclave.² And though this tiny territory was arguably never in law properly alienated from China – though it never properly belonged to Europe – still a Hong Kong handover style of treaty was signed between Beijing and Lisbon in 1987. As a result the Portuguese and the citizens of Macao found themselves with virtually the same benefits post-handover that London had negotiated for its crown colony across the delta. Those benefits principally include fifty years of guaranteed civic autonomy and protection for Portuguese language and Portuguese law. At the time of writing, ten years after the institution of the one country two-systems policy, one hardly hears the phrase mentioned. That might generally indicate that it's working.

Why then call Macao an island? It's a popular misconception. And certainly if one looks at the old maps, it is a very narrow isthmus that joined the peninsula of Macao to the rest of China. In the more distant past, before a sandbar silted into an isthmus, what is now peninsula Macao was in fact an island. Today Macao is nearly three times in area what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century; and land reclamation started hundreds of years before that. Nor is it hard to see what drove the reclamation. Despite its rapid expansion in area Macao remains the most crowded territory on earth, with a population density four times that of Hong Kong. It's true that parts of Hong Kong – places like Mongkok and Sham Shui Po and Kowloon – are the most crowded square kilometres on the planet; Hong Kong's overall population density is greatly diluted by the fact that more than 40% of the land area is country park (and in fact less than 20% of the total land area is fully urbanised). Macao is almost entirely lacking in “country” as such. Because of its small size, Macao presents as the paradigm case of place as the “point on the map”.

In Macao we witness the miracle of city space made more through the inexorable reclamation of the land from the shallow silty river – the city's future (and the future of its capital) is not limited to the territory it seems on the ground to be. Returning to the map, we can see in Macao something akin to the figure suggested by Borges and Baudrillard – of the map exceeding the territory it might have been meant to describe. The map of what Macao will be – that imagination of Macao, the aerial view of empty space reclaimed (as seen from the old Macao-Taipa Bridge) – today tangibly exceeds the territory through which the population can freely move. It is because of the land reclaimed being earmarked for casino-

capitalist development, we can speak of the territory added as being something other than Macao-space.

The illusions on which Macao depends are not merely confined to someone else's mountains and a river pretending to be a sea. Portugal too is part of Macao. It's all of Portugal most Chinese people ever see and yet the impression – via food, via television, shop signs, announcements in theatres – can be very convincing. This is Portugal run at a distance by a skeleton staff.

In what sense then should we consider Macao to be an island? Note that other poets have employed the same conceit, for instance in Chan Sok Wa "the moment of waking" we have reference to "the island kingdom" (362). Is the miniature place (the place of miniatures) able to be set aside? Is Macao metaphorically an island in the sense, John Donne informs us, that "no man is"? Is Macao exceptional, unique? Do the rules of elsewhere not apply in Macao? Perhaps it's not so much the answers but the questions that are important. To return to Wong Man Fai's poem, I think the key is in the lines, "I'm constantly questioning/ the island." This kind of questioning is then of a fundamental kind – it goes to the nature of existence and to the senses of identity that are possible in a place. With what measure of reality should a place be credited? The present day world – of postmodernity, of late capitalism – is one full of illusions of scale and pace. Perhaps these are more potent or apparent when they occur in the place which is a dot on the map.

Gambling, for instance, is a most potent of illusions – the idea that the punter can win is of course contradicted by the fact that s/he is entering a palace and someone's money had to pay for it. The Wong Man Fai poem, the end of which is presented above, begins:

I'm on an island
tall buildings erect
fences surround the prison
inviting glances
charming nights one after another
staggering steps on the streets
we have a pit here

placing the bets with shabby souls
chaos, confusion – this compensation
like faces patched out of...

So the island is also a prison – like Hamlet's Denmark – one in which gambling is the compensation for shabby souls. In the Wong poem the charm – as advertised – and the drunken stagger of the reveller provide an apt image of ambivalence. In the chaos and confusion, where identity is something patched together, we begin to recognise "the island" as floating signifier. Is it the case that Macao can be all things to all? Perhaps this is the beauty of the place with no extent.

Uniqueness – or Gambling with Macao Characteristics

Macao as metaphor is bi-directional, and reversible. In other words, disclosing the metaphor means that there are two distinct questions to be answered: What does Macao represent?/How is Macao represented? There are a number of planes on which these questions and answers can be tilted, confused. For instance, the question of representation has a political as well as a semiotic dimension. And so we can ask, for instance: Who has the right to represent Macao? And to whom? Nor, rhetorically, is it merely metaphor that is at stake here. We need to interrogate the various associations Macao brings to mind for the resident, for the tourist, for the prospective visitor. Here, marketing meets governance, corporate and otherwise. And there is the question of part/whole relations, the obvious shift in that instance being from participation in a European world empire to being a part of China again to being a part of a world capitalist experiment in the so-called pleasure of gambling. These foregoing are in outline some of the dimensions of connotation carried by the use of the word “Macao”.

Macao’s newfound prosperity is based on gambling and “the gaming industry” (as it euphemistically declares itself) is a focus and locus for many of the key contradictions. Prior to the financial tsunami of the second half of 2008, it had been apparent to all in Macao that the rich were getting richer and the poor were being marginalised faster than ever before. Widely read as an effort to forestall likely May Day demonstrations in 2008, the government was moved to give its citizens five thousand patacas each, one might disingenuously claim, to make tangible the idea that the new prosperity was being shared. With these circumstances in mind, one may match Wong Man Fai’s island metaphor with Debby Vai Keng Sou’s image of a house being offered to the citizen:

a big house

I am offered
a big house
the keys to the house
he keeps

I’m just a little woman
need a home
in this smalltown of mine
miraculously expanding by the minute
less and less space to breathe

a big garden in front
roses greeting me in pink and red
to grow

to pick
to smell

priceless furniture
mahogany
style
cool

a balcony to the sea
good view for a change
from there
to watch the world
to be watched

o, vanity

I am promised five thousand kisses too
dry on the cheeks
no love

May, 2008

In Sou's poem, the "five thousand kisses" are easily recognised. Highlighted here is the contradiction inherent in Macao's style of progress— more territory, less space to breathe. The new opulence is somehow vain and loveless; really it's all about what one might call a local style of voyeurism – a "see and be seen" ethos.

The subject knows she is hailed; or in Stuart Hall's "articulation" theory we might say: here is a subject who recognises herself as discovered by an ideological apparatus. She contends with – she contests – her interpellation by reading more into the government's gesture than the innocent sharing of wealth it is intended to demonstrate. An ironic effect is achieved by attributing human affect in the form of a putative love to what's offered. But no – there isn't love; the cheeks are dry – the gesture was rote, was pragmatic; as Portuguese kisses might more generally seem to the casual Chinese observer.

Macao's sub-national identity entails some forms of identification unique to Macao. Things Macanese – like the patois (*patua*), like certain examples of Macanese cuisine – have the advantage, for the poet wishing to give local flavour, of being unmistakably of a place. In Macao's case, being a territory with integral borders, laws, currency and telecommunications, some of the official aspects of identity usually thought national apply. This too has its poetic uses. Consider Hilda Tam's

poem “tossing the old one pataca” (the *pataca* being uniquely the unit of currency in Macao).

tossing the old one pataca

between sense and nonsense
pots and pans in the brain –
that’s the speech of the self

because words won’t mean
I pick up a coin from the desk
two delicate pictures

one I call yes
and the other side no

so double the meanings
tire the mind

the lion nods –
that’s the signal

air flows
while the coin spins in it

it’s fate
falls into the palm

why are there
just two answers?

(325)

There’s mystery added by the fact that it’s the “old” pataca, not the coin currently in circulation. But there’s nothing else in the poem to link it with Macao; it’s this one central image – highly specified – that places this meditation on what must be admitted a very Macao conflation of themes – luck, choice, meaning, decision.

The gambling theme is one that has increasingly been given Macao characteristics in recent poetry. In the “blind” section of Pierre ‘Tai Pi’ Wong’s poem “mid-day images”, the reader is shown how everyone’s field of vision is diminished by focus on the object of luck and the moment of winning or losing.

blind

I see
busy midday moments
everyone stuck inside a can
one taxi driver, sometimes blind
won't see the residents anymore
at the slot machine
I bump into that poor blind man
his eyes are so bright now
like Sands neon
gazing at the iron pearl of the Russian wheel
mumbling
'18', '18', '18', '18'
the iron pearl is like the losing gambler
after some emotional cramps
it falls on '0'
that poor man
is just like me –
he's completely blind

AV & KK (270-1)

Blindness manifests in several related ways in Wong's poem. The taxi driver is a danger to the pedestrian residents because he sometimes won't see them crossing the road, and then there's a real blind man in the poem (with blazing eyes to remind us of Dylan Thomas' famous villanelle). The brightness of the blind man's eyes is likened to that of Sands neon (i.e. the neon signs of the Sands Casino, opened in 2003, first of the new generation of casinos). This brings us by association to the object of the gambler's gaze, which is the roulette ball. We hear the gambler's prayerful incantation, his mumbled wish that the ball land on his number, which of course it doesn't. All of this provides an unexpected analogy with the poem's persona. We learn that s/he too is blind and that this surprise has the disturbing effect of suggesting that everything we've gleaned so far through the poem (images, associations, analogies) has been unreliable. So that we the readers are literally in the position of the blind being led by the blind. Implied here, I think is that there is no stable point of view available from which the city or anything in it might be viewed. Nor is this merely postmodern effect for its own sake. It's a pattern of metonymic shift – *glissement* – driving through this poem that prevents the reader's eye from resting on any particular image or any certain analogy. The effect overall is to simulate the infinitely distracted experience of the gambler – of the one obsessed with the win/lose evanescence of luck in the vanishing here and now. In case the reader might be tempted to look for hopeful signs, in the last section of the poem, "darkness", the reader's offered this conclusion:

darkness

darkness
spreading after noon
we've been searching
hoping to leave the lost
then you will discover
we are together
completely blind –
this century's horrible disease
(271)

Here we read some of the ethical questions characteristic of the Macao casino poem and its overarching interest in the idea of an economy premised on the voluntary taxation of those who come from far flung places because they are addicted to chance.

Whores, Beggars, Gamblers,

Concomitant with the gambling interest (remaining with the theme of luck/chance), a fascination with beggars is widespread among Macao poets of recent time, for instance in this collaborative poem by Hilda Tam and Sidney Ung.

pedestrian overpass, Rua do Campo

high over the street
of bosses passing
horns sounding from under
man half naked
and a little limbless
keeps kowtowing
bom bom
the forehead hits
the pavement
which is his platform
stage over the street
bom bom
for the punters
a coin or a note drops
they give or they won't
he's still a professional
nothing can break his calm

this lying around
is never restful
bitter hands around the bowl
hard work got him there
lunch time
break for the chicken rice box
just like the rest of us
he eats!
and when he goes
back to work
bom bom
you too can be his boss
just one pataca
or a crumpled ten's
all it takes
the same coin
always comes back
attach it to a string
see how long
a man can kowtow

(328-9)

As in Freud's "fort/da" game we see in outline the symptoms of a repetition compulsion. And this psychological dimension is mapped over the socio-economic conditions, simplified to the form of Hegelian master/slave relations. There are various questions we might ask about roles and reversals here. For instance – who is the worker and who is the workless in this picture? Who is deserving, who is undeserving? And who is kowtowing to whom? Or to what? One of the ironic fantasies the beggar's figure inspires is that – having come still in the rat race chaos – s/he might be the one ahead of the game. In this sense the beggar is a figure of reversal.

Let's turn now to an older example of the beggar portayed, in part of a poem from one of the key Portuguese voices in Macao today, that of Carlos Marreiros. From a 1980 poem, "An Old Umbrella":

wire's bony frame
hidden by rag
a bit of skin
wind's arms
belly is nothing

...

on the hill
of last night's rubbish
empty hands of the beggar's carcass
surrendered to its own condition
failure, inferior, unjust
after all the attempts
impossible yet
not yet thirty
but centuries past

...

the point where everything begins
and everything ends
the condensation of all and of nothing, and all at once
where there is no history
neither does age make sense

LH & KK(113-4)

I think the beggar is a figure of fascination for Macao poets today because s/he embodies certain contradictions inherent in Macao's new found gambling oriented wealth. The beggar can be seen as the negative figure of luck, the character cast on the street through bad luck – the very type of the aphorism “there but for the grace of God, go I.” And the beggar is suggestive of alms and so of religious obligation. In Macao the question will always be – which religion (?) – and so I think we can ask – which obligations (?). The beggar is also a figure of distrust – (Is s/he genuine? Is s/he part of an organised scam?). So this character is victim of the economy but also somehow an image of corruption or at least of doubt, of dubious morals. The point is that the beggar is a type/figure/character who begs questions about the identity of Macao and its inhabitants more generally. The figure of the beggar embodies questions as to whose place it is, as to who is deserving and who is not, questions as to who is the real thief – of time, of money, of identity.

The gambling oriented society produces all kinds of losers. In a general sense it's been possible in the past to see the whole of the Mainland's population somewhat in the light of Hans Christian Andersen's little match girl – folk sadly excluded from the warmth and the fun of a capitalist economy. An example of that – no longer viable – thinking is in José Silveira Machado's “The Rickshaw Man”.

he came
from the other side of the river
in the tide's flow
held in waters of hope
night without stars
empty pockets

pedalling the hungry lanes
sipping at bowls of rain
sleeping under the cold awning
gone in the wind's wings

lives alone
the rickshaw man

sits in night's shadow
neither would gods comfort him

rot in the heart
of the life without hope
nothing in pockets
with holes

the rickshaw man
lives alone

LH & KK(24)

It would probably be fair to say that most of Macao's population came from the "other side of the river" at some stage in the last century. Since the opening up of the eighties it has become progressively more difficult to look pityingly *en masse* at the population of China. Perhaps a more nuanced view of the state of play with winners and losers is presented in Hilda Tam's "my whore at Rua de Cantão".

I saw a whore
in an ad:
red hair
blue eyes
big tits
fat bum

I gulped
I felt in my pocket
I went into the sauna

and there she stood:
red hair
blue eyes
big tits
fat bum

ashamed
I stepped back
back to gaze at my whore
in the ad

(326)

The winner's prize may be easier to stomach in prospect and in virtual form than in flesh and blood.

Depicting City Space

Consciousness of place in contemporary Macao poetry appears to be dominated by two kinds of space; I will gloss these here as "Macao space" and "anywhere space". In his 1995 monograph *Non-places: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Marc Augé describes three "figures of excess...employed to characterize the situation of supermodernity". These three figures are "overabundance of events, spatial overabundance, the individualization of references" (40–41). Augé writes of an "excess of space...correlative with the shrinking of the planet":

with the distancing from ourselves embodied in the feats of the astronauts and the endless circling of our satellites. In a sense, our first steps in outer space reduce our own space to an infinitesimal point, of which satellite photographs appropriately give us the exact measure. But at the same time, the world is becoming more open to us. We are in an era characterised by changes of scale — of course in the context of space exploration, but also on earth: rapid means of transport have brought any capital within a few hours' travel of any other. And in the privacy of our own homes, finally, images of all sorts, relayed by satellites and caught by the aerials that bristle on the roofs of our remotest hamlets, can give us instant, sometimes simultaneous vision of an event taking place on the other side of the planet. (31)

Of the world's computer screens, Augé writes:

We can say of these universes, which are themselves broadly fictional, that they are essentially universes of recognition. The property of symbolic universes is that they constitute a means of recognition, rather than knowledge, for those who have inherited them: closed universes where everything is a sign; collections of codes to which only some hold the key but whose existence everyone accepts; totalities which are partially fictional but effective; cosmologies one might think had been invented for the benefit of ethnologists. (33)

Cosmopolitanism, since ancient times, has been the privilege of an elite capable of exercising the knowledges and recognitions required to transcend the ground on which a subject stood as particularly of a place and bound to place. It's in such a sense Macao's poetry today may be regarded as broadly cosmopolitan – i.e. constituted in overlapping universes of recognition, to which the poets in question and their good readers, hold the appropriate keys. But today's cosmopolitan elite lacks the defined knowledge and identifications of ages past.

On the macro scale we can read Macao as an open door through which goods, capital, humans and their imaginary references all circulate, sometimes at a dizzying pace. A cinematic sense of the place (discussed a little below) then does perhaps convey an idea of (what Augé names spatial overabundance). Late noughties advertising for Macao as a tourist destination (as for instance shown non-stop on the jetfoil from Hong Kong) reveals the dot on the map as making available to its citizens and visitors every conceivable kind of space and concomitant activity – windsurfing, tower viewing, bungee jumping, heritage walks, leafing through ancient tomes in a library, dining in every style imaginable and of course placing bets on the gaming tables. On the ground though, during the boom years now passing, public transport had increasingly become an undesirable way to get anywhere. With no particular brakes on the acquisition of private vehicles by the wealthy citizenry, at peak hours a great proportion of the cars on Macao’s roads are there because their drivers are simply trying to park; leading to the maxim that *to go anywhere in Macao one must first go everywhere*.

For Augé, important characteristics of non-place include “an experience — without real historical precedent — of solitary individuality combined with non-human mediation (all it takes is a notice or a screen) between the individual and public authority” (117–118).

Clearly the word “non-place” designates two complimentary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. Although the two sets of relations overlap to a large extent, and in any case officially (individuals travel, make purchases, relax), they are still not confused with one another; for non-places mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes. As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality. (94)

It’s interesting to think of “solitary contractuality” in terms of a slot machine culture: the slow lonely process of making a fortune or losing the lot. And yet the crowdedness of spaces in Macao (in China/East Asia more generally) belies the sparsity and the inhuman aspect Augé associates with “non-place”:

But the real non-places of supermodernity—the ones we inhabit when we are driving down the motorway, wandering through the supermarket or sitting in an airport lounge waiting for the next flight to London or Marseille—have the peculiarity that they are defined partly by the words and texts they offer us: their “instructions for use”, which may be prescriptive (“Take right-hand lane”), prohibitive (“No smoking”) or informative (“you are now entering the Beaujolais region”). (96)

Macao has such signage, to be sure, and yet the average citizen’s (or visitor’s) experience of it would be brief. In Macao – the particular paradox with regard to the signing of non-place space – is that what makes it particular is the fact of it being exoticized as incomprehensible. The street and shop signs compulsory in Portuguese cannot be read at all by the vast majority of the population; nor can Chinese tourists read the Portuguese; nor in general can western tourists read the Chinese or the Portuguese signage. Of course a Portuguese name, written in the

Roman alphabet, will serve for a name in English or in any other European language. But try telling such a name to a Macao taxi driver and – good luck. The main street of Macao is, to the population at large, San Ma Lo. Ask anyone about Avenida da Almeida da Ribeiro (the Portuguese name) and you'll get a blank stare. The sign in Portuguese is something people simply don't see (the way I don't see the Chinese characters on the keyboard on which I'm typing this – because they are simply not relevant).

To return then to a distinction between “Macao space” and “anywhere space”. Macao space is uniquely of an historical moment and place, something culturally positioned; in anywhere space (e.g. inside of a casino or an airport) subjects are hailed by consumption-oriented reifications of putative universal value. In the terms Umberto Eco elaborates in *The Role of the Reader*, we recognize in anywhere space a “closed text”, i.e. a text in which the addressee is not invited to participate actively, but is rather offered a pre-determined role, open neither to interpretation nor negotiation. Macao space, being particular, is contingent. Having a history, it can have a future. The contemporary Macao poetry typically values Macao space and sees it as under threat from the “non-negotiable” space of culture that could be anywhere.

In Loi Chi Pang's poem, “to Coloane”,³ we get a picture of anywhere space being added to Macao:

little city too cramped
so cramped that there is only space left for muttering
the many roads not taken knit into a helpless net
skims from my eyes
under the net there is such a stunning hope
a naming for all kinds of new things
simply
a word
“cold”

the autumn of September here is a book of sorrow more than sadness
so sad that the egret can't stand any longer under the mangroves
holding up an oilpaper umbrella to Coloane
I can't see rain
but only
ashes and stones of the cement trucks
flying past
and
the Cotai Strip
still under construction

HT & KK (290)

Here, witnessing the process of “reclamation” shows us that liminal space – green space in this case – cannot become a part of the known place. The egret will be deprived of its mangrove; instead the “new things” are worthy only of the word “cold”. This is anywhere space is the making; and it’s made of ashes and cement, of anything.

In Erik Lo Yiu Tung’s poem “the city starts to flee with the speed of the stars”, we indulge the fantasy of the city escaping a violence of growth even dreams can’t conceal.

the city starts to flee with the speed of the stars

grow up rapidly, the city starts
to flee with the speed of the stars
used to chase after each other in the park when young
one year the hand of the clock was sprained
even dreaming can’t conceal
the violence of growth

after dark the street becomes the future trenches of the children
they have been asking lots of questions that adults can’t answer
when I was young, mother fooled me and said those were just accidents
perhaps there are too many accidents beneath the sky, for example:
on the street in June or July, we might have
met behind the police tape
watching the city continually flee with the speed of the stars
it turns out that there are still lots of unanswerable doubts
within the distance that can’t be asked
I have long been used to that

EL & KK (324)

Where is the poetry in this? On which side of the police tape? Clearly accidents are suspicious; some transgression is indicated. Doubts are unanswerable, space and time as we knew them can no longer be relied on – the clock is sprained, the distance cannot be asked. In these circumstances the idea of the future is reduced to trench warfare.

In Xi Lan’s “it’s only in death we’re not foreigners” we get a skewed picture of the poet’s place:

the view through the mirror
is the reflection of contorted reality

I suddenly lost all hopes, but am joyful

I lie below the Ruins of St Paul – they’re under construction
drinking a beer once cold, following the whole city working hard
at being dispirited breathing in the air breathed out by others
as I understand it, poets have always tried to live well
in other people’s lives

JL & KK (379)

In the touristic city the ruins are under construction. Life is close. We breathe in the air others have breathed. We see that even poetry is a compromised activity; it’s essentially parasitic. Poets try to live well in others’ lives. Tam Chon Ieng’s “a game”, by contrast shows us poetry as a kind of resistance to the house becoming unknown:

the world can almost stop, the rotten sound of the bell
hasn’t submitted to poems
poets stand one by one next to each other
thinking with their eyes covered, they finish the game
in the midst of the singers

too many people enter, more and more stones in the house
can no longer be known

HT & KK (386)

Cinematic Un/consciousness of Space

What kind of a space is a city? Is the city in particular? Is any city anywhere? What relationship obtains between the city in particular and any city anywhere? I think there are useful terms of analogy with the relationship we can theorise between nation in general and a nation in particular. Benedict Anderson’s second paradox of the national is that nations are particular instances of identity of which all persons are – at least notionally – possessed (5). That is to say, nation is a kind of universal difference: everyone’s nationality is not the same as someone else’s. Along these lines, a key paradox of “anthem quality” (the soul stirring evocation of national sentiment felt by those who stand for their national anthem) is a uniformity of differences. Every member of the series “nation” must have a national anthem; as a consequence, though anthems are notionally intended to express the differences between nations, reflection reveals that they serve also to illustrate the consistency of national investments across international borders. In other words, although people generally feel that expressions of devotion to flag or soil or anthem or any other abstraction of national homeland are particular, and suggest distinction from the devotions of others to other places, in fact dedication to nations in particular is – as evidenced by the machinery-in-common – the shared worldwide “spiritual” commitment of the modern citizen. In this sense we may think of national devotion as essentially devotion to the notion of nation.

Devotion to a city (for instance the artist's or writer's commitment to the representation of his or her city) has a number of similarities with national devotion; and yet it is a less abstract devotion in that the city's citizens are – relative to those of the nation – more likely to have met each other. They are also likely to have more in common: they breathe the same air, experience the same weather. So the connection is more natural, less manufactured.

In her 1995 volume *The Culture of Cities*, Sharon Zukin writes, “for several hundred years, visual representations of cities have “sold” urban growth... Images, from early maps to picture postcards, have not simply reflected real city spaces; instead, they have been imaginative reconstructions—from specific points of view—of a city's monumentality” (16). Zukin tells us, “Cities impose visual coherence in many ways: by using zoning to impose design criteria for office buildings, by making memory visible in historic districts, by interpreting the assimilation of ethnic groups in street festivals, by building walls to contain fear” (77).

From the point of view of the current investigation, the point needing made is that a city's poetry does not represent some kind of objective or independent witness of place. However obscure or difficult it may seem, poetry is not above or outside of the cultural processes by which places and peoples represent or symbolize themselves; rather it is – as other forms of culture are – bound by what we might think of as a culturally produced aura of the place, for which purpose the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. So poetry and the points of view it expresses are bound up with more general attitudes and opinions of places, with the everyday loyalties and doubts people have for the places they identify as theirs. And the poetry of a place, produced as it mainly is by a cultural elite, is naturally a vehicle for a critique, both of the culture in general, and of those specific representations – especially the official (for instance the touristic) representations– which impact on “the place in mind” experienced by inhabitants, by visitors and by outside observers.

In *Tourism and the Branded City: film and identity on the Pacific Rim* Stephanie Donald works through three case studies (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Sydney) to look at *inter alia* how “the tie-in between enhanced film locations and national tourism campaigns offers a perfect commercial and creative synergy between the digital media, the film industry and the tourism agencies” (2). Donald writes that it is:

no secret that the global narratives of cinematic affect and urban resonance are rooted in the pre-eminence of American and European cities. This is due in part to the academic and popular publishing power in those regions and also, need it be said, the phenomenal success of American film export over the past century. Everyone who sees films knows, or thinks they do, what a US city looks like. New York, San Francisco, Chicago and LA are embedded in cinematic consciousness, thanks to the many versions of those cities that populate the Hollywood screen. Even specific locations (the easterly view over the Hudson River, the running path by the basketball courts in Central Park) are recognizable to viewers who have never set foot in

the United States. Europe also has its cinematic cities: Berlin, London, Paris and Rome. (4)

Embeddedness of cinematic consciousness (and perhaps more importantly of cinematic unconsciousness) clearly prevails in the case of Macao, in a poetry that is written with cinematic ways of seeing space in mind. Take for example Siu Hey's poem "developing a port – repertoire":

prelude, <xylophone concerto>

please switch off mobile phones
for the purposes of historical reflection
messages can't be sent four hundred years back
the church is a light-purple ticket
gets you into Lang Bai Ao the moment the storm stopped

iron strikes against flesh composing a drum rhythm
but the melody is sour
now
you command I order
cruel applause
and weeping

second, <majestic march>

drums and cannons
mate under the statue
of Governor Ferreira do Amaral
waving to you
recruiting you to join the hero who destroyed opium

the lotus stone is for cutting open the belly
so it's redder than Christmas flowers

smiling need not entail frivolity
blood is flowing in the east

heroes' hearts beat slowly

JL & KK (334)

The overt musical structure of the piece belies the filmic – it could almost be read as scenario (plus commentary) for a commercial-length film montage. Yi Ling's 1989 poem, "filming in the residential district" avows the space of the poem as cinematic:

filming in the residential district

night darkens
glance at the middle of the street
a young man in a jumper, trainers and trousers
looks like he's running
looks like he's talking on the phone
looks like he's walking a dog
looks like he's making a deal with someone
his running legs
rely on an automatically extending dog belt
maintaining the link between human and canine
sometimes long sometimes short sometimes broken
the dog is in front
he follows behind
the dog is pulling him
then he runs
middle of the street
stops
his left hand moves the phone nearer his ear
the mouth starts to eject words, sentences
it's like a dog that squeezes its work onto the street
the dog hasn't finished
but the master pulls him away

a Macanese with his office smile
eyes up at the sky
night draining away
the rest of the day

5 September 1989

AV & KK (180)

And in Lou Kit Wa's "inspirations of the chicken", we likewise witness directed space.

of course, having a pair of wings
rather than a pill or a dance floor
makes the ears and eyes wild
angers the hair
and then
you forget your identity

your parents
guilt
forget about its iron cage
their bodies get close to each other
wiggling
falling to the ground
waiting for dark night to enter
directing a film's plot
choking the city with sobs

AV & KK (301)

Who's directing and who's directed here would be somewhat more difficult to establish. As in Lou's poem, one sometimes finds a surreal cartoon quality – an oneiric city of impossible transformations is conjured, as in Erik Lo Yiu Tung's "sleepwalking":

your world slims down, flowing along the river outside the window
little birds also fly away, you said
as if once you spread your hands you could touch
the edge of the sea

the bottle has been collecting the rain
recording restlessly just like a typewriter
hey! you naughty kid
you throw the bottle on purpose towards
the edge of the sea. you said
to step across time, we even step onto our own heads!

you're a wolf, also a sheep
for example, if a hunter suddenly had to shoot you down
you would flee right across the swamp, the river, go through the forest
flee to the path that leads to the life of sorrow
finding the only entrance

hey! do you really need to pick the poison worm seed from the dream
scheme?
that pair of devilish hands which direct fate will soon let
eyes drop into the ocean of lashes
you haven't got over the sleepwalking
it doesn't connect at all

EL & KK (323)

This cinematic un/consciousness of space is, in Macao's case, despite the fact that Macao space – unlike that of New York or Paris or Rome or Hong Kong has

not been the object of a long tradition in film; nor would its landmarks be easily recognized by an international film-viewing audience. Macao's space is however cinogenic. The fact that it has not much been depicted in actual cinema provides poets with both opportunity and responsibility. The place is changing so quickly, there is danger at every moment that a particular ambiance will be irretrievably lost.

Stephanie Donald writes, "there is a local sense of belonging that is particular to Hong Kong and which makes narrating the city-as-brand a delicate task. When this narrative task is tested against the work of filmmakers, arguably the strongest voices in Hong Kong's cultural worlds, it emerges that the competing patriotisms are not invariably commensurable" (5). The patriotisms to which Donald refers are, in Macao and Hong Kong's cases, embedded in similar problematics: loyalty to the colonial past or the national future; to the East, to the West; to the local or the larger identity. A key difference is that in Macao's case, filmmakers could not be argued to be strong voices in Macao's cultural worlds. Theirs would be fledgling voices in Macao; there simply aren't enough of them. Instead, poets, architects, visual artists, designers, musicians – these are Macao's strong voices in culture today.⁴ Perhaps it's the fact that in relative terms poetry need not be so time consuming activity that has allowed this *perruque*⁵ to be the favoured form of expression of so many Macao intellectuals. In a sense hitherto not much recognized, I think poetry has served as witnessing vehicle of choice because, in recent decades, it has had the critical mass of a tradition in Macao. Macao's poets are free to play with what is poetic in the cinematic view of their cinogenic space and without needing to actually make films. And yet the Hong Kong cinematic eye is well at home in Macao and plays a defining role in the way Macao space is perceived. The strength of local talent in other areas suggests Macao's is a cinema waiting to happen (one likely to be influenced by the city's part-time poets when it does); and at the same time it needs to be conceded that Macao space is seen by its imaginative citizens through a lens of Hong Kong, Hollywood, Mainland and other cinemas.

Macao's Symbolic Place - a Sleepwalker's Macao

Seeing one's own place with other eyes (detached observation) is a characteristically cosmopolitan and modernist malaise, lot of the *flâneur* for instance. Macao is a pedestrian-scale place and, because of what we now call "heritage", peninsula Macao is one of the world's great city spaces for walking. Walking in Macao's Inner Harbour streets is making one's way through decay, through remnants of past culture. In fact one may read miniature Macao as the paradigm walking city; it's too small to see any other way. To walk is to observe, to understand and to leave traces of all of these processes. Walking is a kind of writing. Footsteps for de Certeau are like Chinese characters drawn with a finger on a hand: "they are

myriad but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and of kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces” (97). For de Certeau, the “long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations no matter how panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them nor in conformity with them” (101). Noughties Macao does have its panoptic point – the tower and its view and its bungee-jumping spectacularism; things captured on film and offered the tourist.

The cinematic impression a city makes melds seamlessly into another (and closely related) *mise-en-scène*: that of the dreamer. In Lok Ka I’s “homesick on a soundless night”, the question of displacement stands ironically at odds with a personal sense of placelessness.

where is my home?
heaven knows
homesick thoughts of missing

no reason for a cheerful face
no footnote for a broken heart
on a swing
a dream of the future sways

‘can’t bear to climb high to look beyond
my hometown far away
I shed tears for bygone years
why does the pain remain?...’

on a bustling street
who wants to be a lonely walker?
I keep my own counsel
see afar
not going home, just passing

life is tedious
seeking reasons to set roots
clouds are stirring in the air
it’s difficult to breathe
got to find an excuse
to smash a glass plate
a good many times
order a cappuccino
drop in a cube of sugar

together with the bubbles I swallow all that was clear
awake after

the coffee reminds me of the moon of my town
drinking alone on a moonlit night

DS, JH & K (368)

On a bustling street/who wants to be a lonely walker? “To walk is to lack a place”, de Certeau tells us. In the city of pleasure and potent illusions (i.e. those on which a gambling industry depends) the oneiric and the ambulatory can read as views through the one miasma. For de Certeau – “the similarity between ‘discourse’ and dreams has to do with their use of the same ‘stylistic procedures’; it therefore includes pedestrian practices as well” (102). In the city, as in the dream, things needn’t make sense. The connection is already made in the last line of Erik Lo Yiu Tung’s “sleepwalking”: “it doesn’t connect at all” (323). But things contiguous with no appearance of connection are things which require interpretation; as for the dream, so for the city.

Dreams are a major preoccupation in Macao poetry today. The idea of Macao – the city or territory – as a dreaming entity or a sentience in itself capable of dreams is the subject of the experiment in Fernando Sales Lopes’ poem “Macao”:

Macao

You’re open to the sea
inside
you want to escape
from your fate

Rough toss
and you reach
to conquer
the body
seized
by the earth

You dream...

You dream you are
what you were by chance
But your destiny
is written
in the smoke

that protects men
and appeases gods

The grand mother
holds
your body

And the soul
returns to her

LH & KK (139)

Here Macao, the sleepy outpost, is personified as a character wishing, but unable, to escape fate. This sleepy Macao image – so hard to sustain today – is an important reminder of what Macao has meant – especially to the Portuguese – for most of its modernity. Today’s Macao resembles some heretofore unknown cross between casino, building site, world heritage antique and a place where some hapless folk are just trying to get on with their lives. It’s a place sleep cannot be relied on. And when sleep won’t come ? Terence Hun (Ling Gu) gives us the picture:

insomnia

thoughts
are
gangs of wolves
one gang after another

the field belongs to them
the waves in the grass belong to them
what you have is
only their howling
your breath has nothing to do
with wind through the grass or beat of the heart
they are having a race in any direction

if you think of
a starting point and a destination
all the wolves circling
breathing, motionless
mouths opened
biting each other

your life
is like this

hanging in the sky –
a perfect philosophy

AV & KK (251)

Casinos, luck, chance; beggars and gamblers and prostitutes; the water and what lives in it, passes through it; likewise the air; development and reclamation; border business, dreams, poetry, art – contemporary Macao poetry negotiates a range of related themes and images, as sampled above. Investment in the intercultural and its difficulties and possibilities provides a consistent backdrop for the development of these themes.

Local poetry has had an important investment in understanding Macao's symbolic place – between east and west – and in understanding the nature of encounters across cultures here, likewise in accounting for intercultural misunderstandings. These interests are important also in the official culture (touristic and otherwise), and in contemporary Macao poetry we may detect cynicism, critique, annoyance with the official line. Take for instance, Eric Chau's poem "the silent Macao", footnoted with the author's "ps. After Macao's successful inclusion on the world heritage listing, the

TV advertisements continuously repeated the slogan, 'a world of difference, the difference is Macau'. It became the voiceover of my nightmare at that time." Chau links this new official image with the handover. "A bitter fruit was swallowed for four hundred years", we're told, and now:

a lie that's been spoken a hundred times – truth
(a world of difference, the difference is Macau)
why does the same phrase have to be repeated a hundred times?
a truth repeated a thousand times adds a bit more than the truth
just that little bit of absurdity
(a world of difference, the difference is Macau)
why does the same slogan have to be repeated a thousand times?
I'm silent

And why? On paper one may be struck by the apparent disingenuousness of the voluble protester claiming to be silent. However, what's written may not be heard and in the case of poetry perhaps it is not unusual for loud claims in ink to go unheeded. In this case, Chau's persona is silent because s/he doesn't:

...know what to say
once hurt now I can only think of the scar, an ignorant violation
hegemony is not the creature of sin or desire swept along by the
postcolonial
insensitively thinking of the past calamity
but saying that it's for cultural exchange not knowing if there is such a
thing

The critique is offered in local and international terms; what's revealed is a cheapening of culture borne of the servitude expressed in the compulsory smile – the smile that is itself a kind of trickery, encouraging the gambler to think of himself as a winner.

perhaps
billions invested mold our firm smiling face
receiving the neither flesh nor fowl spirit of Morocco or Las Vegas
splitting up into shining casinos for entertaining spirits in between
dragon-riding Holy Mary and A Ma on waves
shouting at “win them all” supporting our welcoming visitors from
everywhere and not forgetting to smile

And so silence here is about the fact of being deprived of a voice; the theoretical underpinnings are unusually well articulated.

culture somebody sees it thinks that it's a business someone feels a
thorn
in the heart letting the graceful heritage be restored
our confidence is fake but we have swallowed something bitter that
was not
easy
I'm speechless I'm silent I don't have a standpoint

I laugh
but I'm not happy
(a world of difference, the difference is Macau)
(a world of difference, the difference is Macau)

AV & KK (239)

Baudrillard writes, “The irony of the facts, in their wretched reality, is precisely that they are only what they are” (1996, 98). It's along these lines Chau captures a casino mesmerism, a circular logic and enigmatic logic – of tautology – that keeps the wheels of the gambling tourism economy greased.

The City Itself

The “city” is itself an important focus for poetry being written all over the world today and has been for more than a century. While Macao is in various ways a particular place, there are other senses in which it could be *any* city – any place – in south China, in East Asia, in the world. Macao itself should be regarded as a work enduring (in Brechtian terms) because it is unfinished. “How long do works last?” Brecht⁶ asks in one of his later poems. His answer? “As long as they are not completed. Since as long as they demand effort they do not decay” (193). The

work in process supposes a range of futures; imagining a future provides a vantage from which present conditions may be viewed. While this straightforward aesthetic provides a formula that could be notionally applied to any city, such a view seems particularly apt given both the extraordinary pace of change in post-handover Macao, and the present bubble-bursting effect of the 2008 “financial tsunami”. To the extent that poetry partakes of witness of the unknowable potential of a place, we come close here to Shelley’s claim about the poets being unacknowledged legislators. Through their engagement with dreams we apprehend the Macao poets as hierophants of inspiration for their city.

How are city and poets – the space of the city and the “mindspace” of the poem – connected or disconnected? How might they meet or not? One thinks of Plato’s expulsion of the poets in Book Nine of the *Republic*; their banishment as undesirables from the ideal city state on which Socrates expands so volubly. It was with close reference to Plato’s attitude to and expulsion of the poets that W.H. Auden wrote in his (1962) essay “The Poet and the City”, of a fundamental disaffinity between poetic methods and goals and what he saw as the nature and the needs of the city.

The whole aim of the poet, or any other kind of artist, is to produce something which is complete and will endure without change. A poetic city would always contain the same number of inhabitants doing exactly the same jobs forever... A society which was really like a good poem, embodying the aesthetic virtues of beauty, order, economy and subordination of detail to the whole, would be a nightmare of horror for, given the historical reality of actual men, such a society could only come into being through selective breeding, extermination of the physically and mentally unfit, absolute obedience to its Director, and a large slave class kept out of sight in cellars... Vice versa, a poem which was really like a political democracy – examples, unfortunately exist – would be formless, windy, banal and utterly boring. (in Scully, 179)

Playful hyperbolics aside, I think the conception of what a good poem could be has moved on somewhat since Auden’s time. The multi-tasking – the “political democracy” (what Bakhtin would call the “multi-accentual”) – is common in poetry around the world today and is well evidenced in contemporary Macao poetry. We could describe Auden’s position above as classically modernist, at least radically pre-postmodern. The irony is that his description of the ideal poem is actually not a bad description of the city from which Plato was expelling the poets – changeless because perfected, the opposite of Brecht’s conception. In fact I think poetry today is much more like the cities in which it is practised than it is like either Plato’s or Auden’s conceptions.

The identity, the self-image, the reflexive consciousness of the poet-as-dweller in the particular place we call a city – these are key factors shaping modernist and postmodernist poetry, its thematic/affective range and its ontological investments. Conversely, the poetic image – like the cinematic – has been a formative influence in our contemporary conception of what city space is, of how humans can or can’t handle it. The poetic image of the city shapes a conception of how such spaces

conform with our utopic or dystopic views of humanity as a species capable of thoughtful dwelling; able to get it wrong, able to make it better.

Poetry of a place is important for making us look again and not merely take for granted the objects and the activities going on around us. The criterion is definitive in the sense that the poem which does not make us look again is not really worth attending to. There's reflexive potential in that process of "re-visioning" because it maximises the chances of our seeing ourselves in the mirror which the poem-of-place naturally is.

Zygmunt Bauman writes of a sense of so-called "objective" space, of physical space arising from a "phenomenological reduction of daily experience to pure quantity, during which distance is 'depopulated' and 'extemporized'" (145). The poem anchored in the space from which it arises tells us of a place as subjective experience; it offers the reader eyes to see, a point of view from which get the sense of a location – so it offers motives for empathy and for identification.

Macao poetry proposes and it assumes an imaginative geography, in Edward Said's terms, and in it we can recognise a tension between – on the one hand universalising and orientalisng tendencies, on the other hand an engagement with the here-and-now of the place as it is lived. Then is "Macao" merely an orientalist construct of the western mind? Is there a "real" Macao being misrepresented through such means? Or is it merely a case of mutual misreading – of inevitable occidentalisms and orientalisms borne of an incomprehension which has the effect of producing "the other"?

A solution to these problems is offered in the idea of poetry as practice of "place-based aesthetics", along the lines suggested by Raymond Williams' "radical particularity" – in this case the effort to claim a place through the conscious effort of producing its culture. Poetry, in this productive sense, can be a paradigm case for Williams' "structures of feeling": in situating our knowledge of this particular poetry, we discover through analysis that things "taken to be private, idiosyncratic and even isolating" are in fact "emergent, connecting and dominant characteristics" (132). What was taken to be personal turns out to be very political, the basis on which a collective identity (for instance that of the dweller in a particular city) is unconsciously determined through views and assumptions in common, and through the common affect these imply.

Why has poetry, in particular, been an efficient vehicle, in Macao's case, for the kind of work Raymond Williams prescribes? I think in Macao we can see poetry in operation as resistance, as witness, as *perruque* – in short, a kind of truth telling only possible from makeshift materials – those put to a use for which they were not intended.

Taken all in all, Macao has very few poets of the kind Plato would not have expelled for subversive activity. Some Macao poets lapse into jingoism now and then; in all but a few cases this is an aberration. The general posture is thoughtful, critical and self-aware. These poets write (and they read) as if everything were

open to question. It is often a painful duty. As Jean Paul Sartre would say, they write as if they were condemned to freedom. Perhaps the pain here is a postcolonial burden; however one considers it, Plato's Socrates would have to acknowledge that Macao's poets are leading the examined life.

Some are wiser or deeper or more biting than others, but I think we can say that there is a strong human rights agenda built into the poetry. It's not any sledgehammer politics – it's not some pointed campaign – rather it's a case of leading by example. Macao's word artists take it as a solemn duty and as a solemn kind of fun as well to criticize everything that needs criticizing in their city. And so they live out the ever-apt dictum spelled out in Auden's 1938 sonnet "Macao" – that "nothing serious can happen here" (1945, 18–19).

Christopher (Kit) Kelen is a well known Australian scholar and poet whose literary works have been widely published and broadcast since the mid seventies. *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* describes Kelen's work as "typically innovative and intellectually sharp". He is also an Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Macau, where he has taught Literature and Creative Writing since 2000. Kelen is the editor of the on-line journal *Poetry Macao* and poetry editor for the monthly lifestyle/current affairs journal *Macao Closer*.

Notes

- 1 Throughout this paper, translators' names are given in initial form at the foot of the poem (or other text) where appropriate. Here is a list of the translators with their initials.

AK: Athena Kong

A: Lam: Agnes Lam

AL: Anita Leong

AV: Agnes Vong

CI: Christine Ieong

CW: Carmen Wong

DB: David Brookshaw

DS: Debby Vai Keng Sou

EL: Elisa Lai

HT: Hilda Tam

IF: Iris Fan

JH: Jacque Hoi

JL: Jenny Lao

KK: Kit Kelen

LH: Lily Han

ME: Maria Antónia N. Espadinha

SZ: Song Zijiang

Note that because much of the poetry cited in this paper originated in the anthology *I Roll the Dice: Contemporary Macao Poetry* [published by ASM in Macao in 2008], where only a page number is given in the in-text citation, the reader should assume that the extract is from that source.

- 2 In 1887 a Luso-Chinese treaty was signed allowing Portugal's perpetual occupation and management of Macao. The Peking government, however, never ceded sovereignty over Macao to Portugal.
- 3 Coloane is the outermost (and larger) of Macao's two islands (the other being Taipa); Taipa and Coloane are now joined by what is called the Cotai Strip, a Vegas style casino-row featuring the Venetian (second largest building in the world), a golf course and sundry other casino resorts.
- 4 One notes also the passing of hats among the personae in the case of particular individuals, a 'Renaissance Macao man' such as Carlos Marreiros being an apt example – architect, poet, designer, graphic artist, painter.
- 5 Michel de Certeau calls a *perruque* a resistance which suggests a need to imbue desire with a creative personality:
La perruque is the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job. *La perruque* may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on 'company time' or as complex as a cabinet maker's 'borrowing' a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room. (1988: 25)
De Certeau's *perruque* diverts time 'from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit' (25). Its pleasure is in the cunning creation of gratuitous products, the purpose of which, in signifying the worker's capabilities, is to 'confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family.' 'With the complicity of other workers... he succeeds in "putting one over" on the established order on its home ground' (26). In de Certeau's estimation it is in popular tactics that order is 'tricked by art'. The *perruque* is work which is foreign, homeless, by virtue of having no dwelling but time stolen from official consciousness.
- 6 Brecht made what we might consider an analogous investigation of city space, in the case of Berlin, in his 1920's poems, 'Reader for City Dwellers'.

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The City at Stake: “Stakeholder Mapping” The City

By Sophie Esmann Andersen and Anne Ellerup Nielsen

Abstract

Studies of the city have been addressed from many different approaches such as law, political science, art history and public administration, in which the economic, political and legal status of the city have played a major role. However, a new agenda for conceptualizing the city has emerged, in which the city assumes new roles. By using stakeholder theory as a framework for conceptualizing the city, we argue that the city assumes a political-economic agenda-setting role as well as providing a stage for identity constructions and relational performances for consumers, organizations, the media, politicians and other stakeholders. Stakeholder theory allows us to conceptualize the city as being constituted by stakes and relationships between stakeholders which are approached from three analytical positions (modern, postmodern and hypermodern, respectively), thereby allowing us to grasp different stakes and types of relationships, ranging from functional and contractual relationships to individualized and emotionally driven or more non-committal and fluid forms of relationships. In order to support and illustrate the analytical potentials of our framework for conceptualizing urban living, we introduce a project which aims to turn the city of Aarhus into a CO₂-neutral city by the year 2030, entitled Aarhus CO₂2030. We conclude that applying stakeholder theory to a hyper-complex organization such as a city opens up for a reconceptualization of the city as a web of stakes and stakeholder relations. Stakeholder theory contributes to a nuanced and elaborate understanding of the urban complexity and web of both enforced and voluntary relationships as well as the different types of relationships that characterize urban life.

Keywords: Stakeholder theory, concepts of the city, relationship, and climate change

Introduction

In the glow of post- and hypermodernity (Lipovetsky 2005; Maffesoli 1996), an alternative agenda for conceptualizing the city has emerged which is sensitive to the dynamics and participatory interchanges and relations between citizens and which supplements the notion of formalized city structures with a conception of the city as an emotional space for identity construction and social scene for image performance, at both organizational and individual level.

In this article we will pursue a dynamic approach to the city as we reconceptualize urban living as interactions and relations between stakeholders. Thus, the article is built upon the premise that cities and organizations can be perceived as parallel entities. Our mission is not to establish a model for managing the city within a frame of public governance, but to establish a framework for understanding the city as a dynamic space for constructions, negotiations and the performance of organizational and individual identity and image.

Based on a theoretical study of stakeholder theory within a modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective respectively, we reconceptualize the city as a complex form of organization constituted by a diversity of relationships and relational formations. This is illustrated by the use of a climate campaign aimed at neutralizing CO₂ levels that is being conducted by the Municipality of Aarhus, entitled Aarhus CO2030. Consequently, the article presents a conceptual stakeholder map of the city which accounts for the complexities and complementarities of stakes and relations in urban life.

The purpose of the article is two-fold: theoretically, it unfolds, differentiates and discusses different approaches to stakeholder theory, with the purpose of contributing to a more detailed understanding of the different types and forms of relationship, their construction and dynamics. Conceptually, the overall purpose of the article is to reconceptualize the city as a complex form of organization, creating insight into urban living as a complex web of relationships.

Stakeholder theory is studied from three positions: a modern, postmodern and hypermodern position. We do not claim that these positions have ontological status in the city; they are merely analytical constructs, allowing us to build an epistemological frame of thoughts for conceptualizing different aspects of the city and discursively construct different proportions of urban life. Hence, these perspectives can be seen as analytical keys for unlocking the complexity and multi-relational dimensions of the city.

The article follows a spiraling approach which synergizes theoretical constructs with conceptual case illustrations, resulting in the generation of ideas and opening of new entries to be continuously explored.

In the following we frame the city within the perspective of urban governance and recent conceptualizations of the city. We account for the theoretical premises

for applying stakeholder theory to a city setting, rooting the argument in the idea of the marketization of the city (e.g. Landry 2000) and new public management theory (e.g. Horton 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000).

Urban Governance

Urban studies have long paved the way for economic, social and cultural studies of the city and how to approach urban spaces from a planning and management perspective (e.g. Graham & Healey 1999; Healey 2004; Healey 2006a & Healey 2006b; Florida 2005; Landry 2000 & 2006; Simpson & Kelly 2008). According to the classical approach of urban studies, spaces of the city are conceived from a centric perspective and the city is conceptualized as a “container”. Places and cities are approached from an instrumental perspective as single, integrated, unitary and material objects that can be managed by using physical and locational variables (Graham & Healey 1999: 624). This conception of the city goes back to the beginning of the 20th century with the appearance of the “Old Chicago School of Urbanism” (Simpson & Kelly 2008: 218). However, while the centric view of the city still leaves traces, it is widely acknowledged that global cities and urban life today call for new descriptions and models in order to understand and account for the functioning of cities and spaces in our time (Simpson & Kelly 2008: 219). In 2001 the “New Chicago School” was founded by urban scholars who approach urbanism in the light of the large-scale structural changes and globalization of the 21st century. Hence the rational, modern approach to urban planning and governance is replaced by a relational approach to the study and governance of cities and places. Rather than being regarded as centric unities within geographical boundaries, cities and places are seen as socially constructed, non-contiguous, diverse, dynamic and superimposed networks of social relations and understandings (Graham & Healey 1999: 628). Consequently, it is no longer possible to consider the city as a bounded, isolated and unitary economy that can be governed with traditional sectorial planning instruments. Only by establishing horizontal collaborative urban planning models that generate synergies between established and emerging stakeholder interests in the city can urban governors and city planners respond to the complexity of urban and regional dynamics. Urban governance hence relies on a broad and multiple conception of citizens and stakeholders involving actors not only from state and regional government bodies, but from businesses, NGOs, teaching and research institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders, including nature and environmental constructs. As claimed by Healey, “strategy making with an appreciation of “relational complexity” demands a capacity to “see,” “hear”, “feel”, and “read” the multiple dynamics of a place in a way which can identify just those issues which need collective attention through a focus on place qualities” (Healey 2006a: 542). Academic interest in the

city has literally been vitalized as geographical borders have dissolved into urban living.

As demonstrated above, the shift from a centric conceptualization of the city towards a more dynamic, fluid and relational understanding of the city has gained ground in urban studies. From being a simple public administration planning activity, urban development and innovation has become a highly sophisticated strategic governance issue based on organizational innovation, business management and interorganizational networking since the end of the 1990s (Bovaird 2008). This also explains why the stakeholder concept seems to have entered the post-structuralist arena of public management including city planning and urban governance.

Marketization and City Branding

Within recent years marketing and management seem to have taken on a profound role within the public sector. Public administration and governance now involves disciplines such as branding (e.g. Virgo & de Chernatony 2006), corporate communication (e.g. Trueman et al. 2004), and marketing (Kotler et al. 1993) initiated by the Public Management Reform (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000) in which the public sector is ascribed market-oriented behaviour. Hence, we are witnessing what is known as a marketization of society at large and of the public sector and state-owned enterprises in particular – at both organizational and individual level. Corporations are conceptualized as citizens (and corporate citizens, Crane et al. 2004), and individuals are addressed as consumer-citizens (cf. Littler 2009; Ritzer 2008). Both within research and as a social practice, there has been a blurring of boundaries between the public and the market, staging the city (as part of public administration conceptualized from a political-economic perspective) as a marketized enterprise, involving complex organizational structures and mechanisms. Thus, the application of theories of management and organization to public administration and urban research seems reasonable and is not new: Virgo & de Chernatony base their city brand-building model on the premise of a multiple and complex variety of stakeholders, thereby arguing that city branding “involves complexities beyond those of product and service branding” (Virgo & de Chernatony 2006: 379). Trueman et al. take a similar approach in combining city branding and stakeholder management as they point out conflicting objectives of stakeholder groups as a basic reason for a complex brand structure dealing with multiple identities (Trueman et al. 2004). The references within stakeholder management and city branding, place marketing etc. are endless. However, all references (similar to Virgo & de Chernatony 2006 and Trueman et al. 2004) apply stakeholder management theory as a practical and/or analytical tool, e.g. in developing a city brand, measuring city brand equity etc. We see these practical/analytical approaches to stakeholder theory in opposition to the approach taken within this

article; that is using stakeholder management theory as a conceptual approach in framing the city as a complex form of organization, helping to reconceptualize the city as networks of compound relations between stakeholders entering different forms of relations and structures according to the stakes and the derived effects and values.

The existing literature demonstrates the relevance of applying stakeholder and management theories to urban studies. Our contribution is to provide a more nuanced and detailed picture of stakeholder theory as we unfold its conceptual potentials as a framework for urban living. In the following we present an elaborate overview on stakeholder theory, epistemologically framed from a modern, post-modern and hypermodern position respectively.

Stakeholder Theory: Mapping the Field

The introduction of the stakeholder concept has helped to redefine the way organizations are conceptualized and managed. Applying a stakeholder approach to managing an organization implies that its managers are perceived as agents for stakeholders and not only for shareholders. The organization is defined in terms of a grouping of stakeholders, and its purpose is to manage these stakeholders' interests, needs and attitudes (Friedman & Miles 2006: 1). The stakeholder concept has gained ground from the mid-1980s following the appearance of an increasing number of books and articles including special issues on the subject in notable journals such as *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Critical Perspectives in Accounting*, *Academy of Management Review* and *Academy of Management Journal* (Friedman & Miles 2006: 3). The stakeholder concept has grown in popularity not only in academic circles but also among policymakers, regulators and NGOs – and in business and the media. For the same reason the stakeholder concept is not a clearly defined concept. It is a multiple concept which covers a broad spectrum of interests and meanings, including schools of thought ranging from political economy to institutional and management theory. Philosophically speaking, stakeholding represents a general sense of social inclusion in a community in which every citizen is a valued member who contributes and benefits. From a participatory perspective, stakeholding assumes active participation in processes of accountability; and financially speaking a material interest in the well-being of an enterprise is what legitimates such participation (Clarke 1997: 211).

The Traditional Approach to Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder approach to understanding an organization in its environment has paved the way for a broader perception of the roles and responsibilities of organizations beyond profit maximization than the perception of the traditional shareholder perspective on organizations. The mission of any organization is not only to provide for the benefit of shareholders and owners. Hence from a stakeholder

perspective, managers should integrate interests and claims from other groups into the strategic management of their business (Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997: 853). Stakeholder management gained a good deal of ground during the 1980s. According to one of the fathers of stakeholder theory, Robert E. Freeman, stakeholders are defined as “groups and individuals who can affect, or are affected by the achievement of an organization’s mission” (Freeman 1984: 52). Freeman pointed out that no group must be left out just because it may prevent a company from achieving its goal. In Freeman’s rather broad definition, groups who do not have a direct legitimate interest in a company (terrorists, for instance) are to be considered as stakeholders along with other more legitimate groups. Stakeholder management thus refers to the necessity for an organization to manage its relationship with particular stakeholders on an action-oriented basis (Freeman 2005: 122).

Traditional stakeholder mapping has the organization at its centre, surrounded by its stakeholders as shown in figure 1.

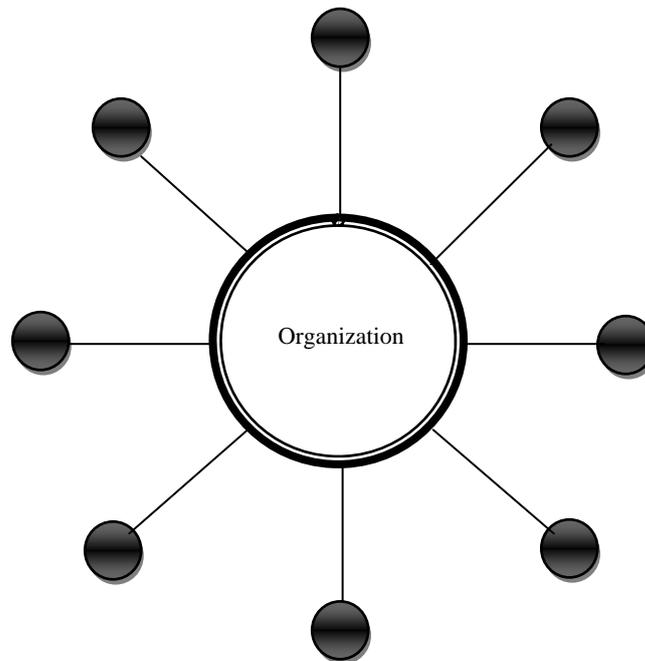


Figure 1: Modern stakeholder mapping

The approach to organizations as presented by Freeman’s stakeholder theory (1984) subscribes to a paradigm of modernity, claiming that the universe is causally linked to a structured and ordered whole (Brown 1995). Transferred into an organizational logic, organizational structures and relations are instrumental, stable and consistent, constantly referring to an acclaimed essence. The organization is an ordered, predictable and measurable unit structured across a rationale of economics, politics and power. Value creation is first and foremost of an economic nature. Metaphorically speaking, modern organizations can be conceptual-

ized as machines (Weber 1947). These thoughts are in opposition to a paradigm of postmodernity, claiming that the world is chaotic and complex; merely to be grasped momentarily and only as an interpretive stance (Lyotard 1984). Hence, postmodernity replaces the universal and global Truth with several individual, local truths. Applied to a management and organizational context, postmodern organizations can metaphorically be conceptualized as living organisms (Weick 1995), assessing the organization as chaotic, unpredictable and unstable. The postmodern turn has equally had a profound influence on stakeholder management theory (Friedman & Miles 2006), as demonstrated in the following section.

The Postmodern Approach to Stakeholder Theory

The most significant exponents of the postmodern perspective on stakeholder theory are Calton and Kurland (1995), who replace the concept of “stakeholder management” with “stakeholder enabling” in order to emphasize the shift from the static instrumental perception of stakeholders who can be “managed” towards a notion of stakeholders as groups who are in a dynamic interaction with the post-bureaucratic networked organization (Friedman & Miles 2006: 71). Collaboration between the organization and its stakeholders is hence unfolded in concepts such as interdependency, co-responsibility, co-decision making and emergent collaboration processes (Friedman & Miles 2006). Consequently, in more recent research on stakeholder theory both the stakeholder concept and the concept of power are approached from a broader and more nuanced perspective. The stakeholder concept hence embraces groups who are momentarily dormant and notions such as non-stakeholder, stakekeepers and stakewatchers, etc. appear in new stakeholder models (Fassin 2008; Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997) along with alternative stakeholder groupings based on salience, urgency, and legitimacy. These alternatives are established in order to adapt stakeholder theory to a more contextualized and emergent approach to stakeholder management (e.g. Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997). Therefore, in a postmodern perspective the stakeholder-oriented organization is one which is part of a stakeholder network connected by mutually linked relationships as demonstrated in figure 2.

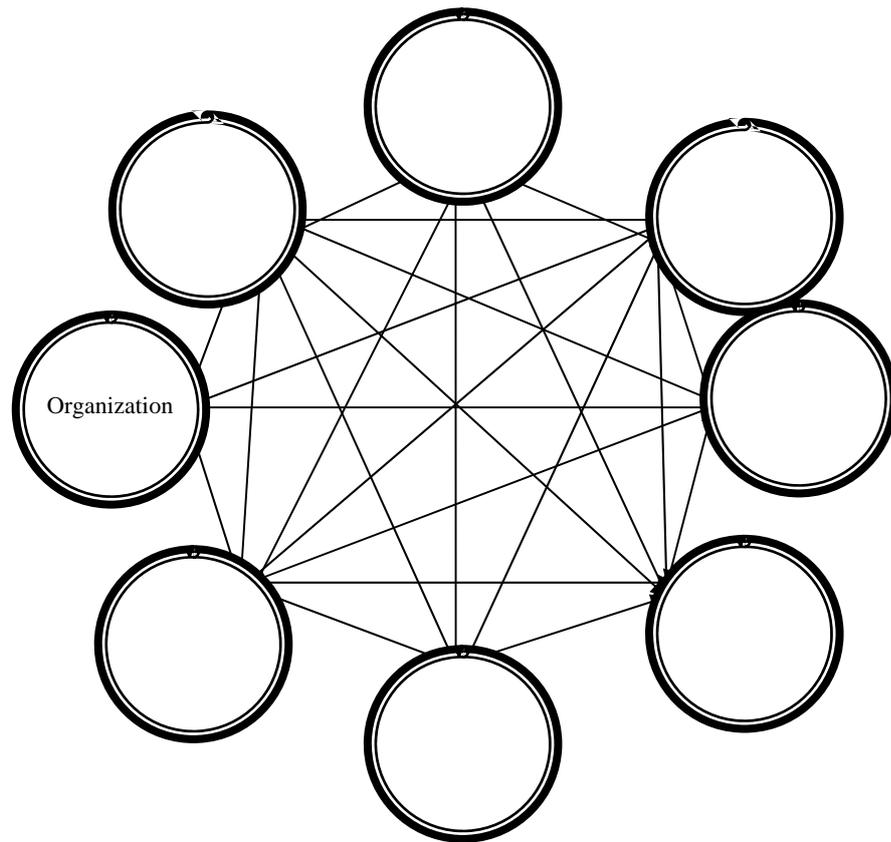


Figure 2: Postmodern stakeholder mapping

Transparency, dialogue and mutual understanding (not between the organization and its stakeholders but between stakeholders within the network) are core elements. Stakeholder management thereby becomes a question of how communication amongst stakeholders is perceived, practised and interpreted. Defined by what is meaningful to each of the stakeholders, value creation comes to embrace emotional as well as rational elements. Inspired by Grunig and Hunt's model of public relations (Grunig & Hunt 1984), Morsing and Schultz (2006) established a framework of stakeholder communication, arguing that stakeholders can be approached using various strategies that take into account the contextual and dynamic features of specific communicative frames. These strategies ranging from linear to interactive ways of addressing stakeholders are devised as a means to approach stakeholder communication from a more strategic and sense-making standpoint, enabling businesses to intensify stakeholder dialogue and incorporate relevant stakeholder response and feed-back into their business strategy. (Morsing & Schultz 2006: 142). However, the strategic reflection on how to confront stakeholders bears witness to a change of focus in stakeholder management. Postmodern stakeholder management theory focuses on meeting rather than managing stakeholders. Meeting stakeholders is not practised from a centric position. Meetings emerge crisscross between members of a network in which the organization

does not constitute a power centre as in the perspective of modernity. Hence, the organization as a centre has dissolved and fragmented into a network of individual stakeholders, whose positions are continuously reflected upon.

The Hypermodern Approach to Stakeholder Theory

According to contemporary philosophers and sociologists, we are entering hypermodern times (Lipovetsky 2005; Maffesoli 1996); a society characterized by the embracing of multiple juxtapositions of oppositions and paradoxes – or as formulated by Lipovetsky: “le bonheur paradoxal” (Lipovetsky 2006); a paradoxical happiness. Hence, while Giddens defined the project of late modernity (or post-modernity) as a search for local and individual coherence and stability for the self (Giddens 1991), the project of hypermodernity has transformed into a project of pragmatics: Truth is no longer an issue, but has been dissolved into a question of eclecticism and pragmatics, thereby being paradoxical, self-contradictory but meaningful (Lipovetsky 2005). Coherent identity is no longer the ideal frame of reference, but has been superseded by a chain of images (Cova 1996). These hypermodern tendencies can also be traced within organizational and stakeholder management theory, in which the organization assumes both intended and non-intended roles in an ever changing and dynamic web of relations as illustrated in figure 3.

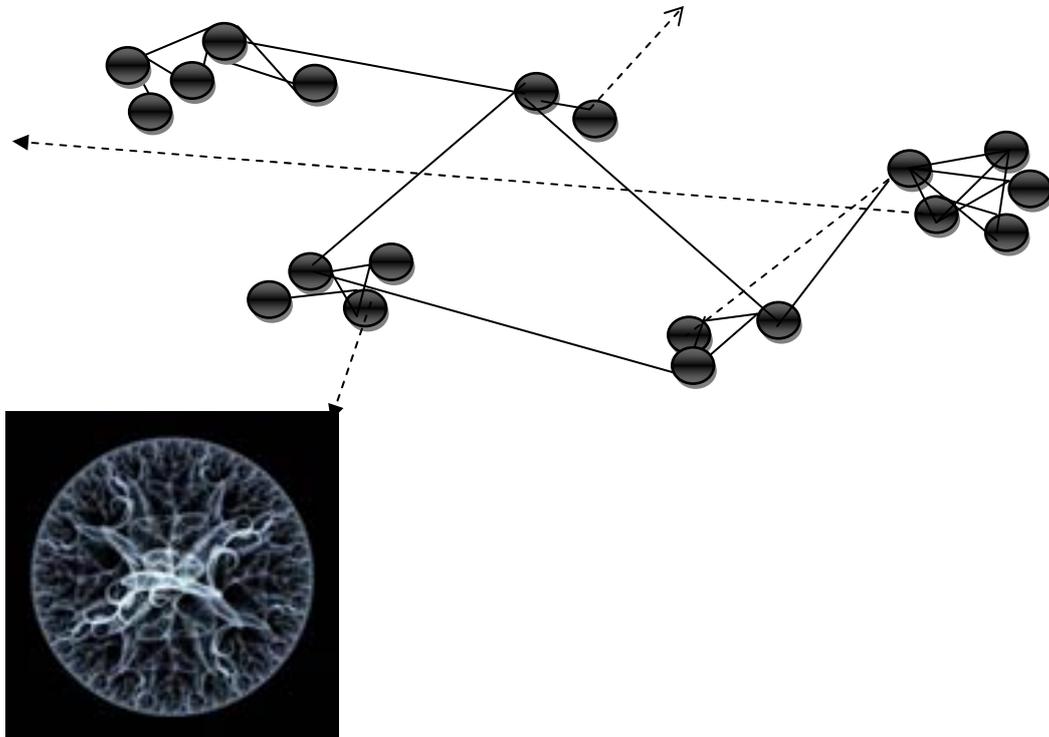


Figure 3: Sector of a hypermodern stakeholder mapping

In the perspective of hypermodernity, corporations do not demonstrate coherent and consistent behaviour. Managing stakeholders is hence a contradictory and paradoxical activity, breaking down the idea of constructing unambiguous and meaningful relationships. Consumers are unpredictable, consuming hyper-luxury goods while engaging in ethical projects at the same time. Corporations demonstrate ethical concern in some stakeholder configurations (saving the rainforest), while doing harm in others (e.g. corruptive bargaining). Acknowledging that stakeholder groups sometimes compete against and sometimes complement each other becomes a non-existing issue (Neville & Menguc 2006: 377). New concepts are entering the arena of stakeholder management in hypermodernity such as stakeholder multiplicity, fluidity and infinity, as elaborated below.

Stakeholder Multiplicity, Fluidity and Infinity

The classical conceptualization of stakeholders as human beings or entities that are aware of their power towards organizations (Driscoll & Starik 2004: 58) means that non-human beings cannot be part of an organization's stakeholder groups. In this perspective "nature" is excluded as a stakeholder, for the reason that the natural environment supplies resources to the organization but usually not through economic exchange relationships. But from a hypermodern angle, the stakeholder concept is extended to include non-human beings. As stated by Driscoll and Starik, the reason why "nature" has been excluded as a potential stakeholder until recently is that the legitimacy and power of stakeholders to help or hurt organizations is more or less anchored in a political-economic framework. They argue that since the natural environment holds coercive and utilitarian power over businesses and industries as an important part of the business environment and through super-storms, hurricanes (and more recently global climate change), there is no reason why the role of stakeholder should not include non-human nature (Starik 1995: 209). Moreover, the natural environment cannot be said not to contain any instantiation of economic authority – for instance, extractive industries in particular depend on the natural environment to provide economic benefits. Finally, the stakeholder concept is said to articulate both ethical and socio-emotional connotations. Moral obligation pointed out by Carroll (1989; 1993) as an important stakeholder value together with the aesthetization of particular natural phenomena (e.g. rare species) are fundamental examples by which nature is praised and attributed aesthetic and expressive value (Starik 1995: 211). In this context value creation is neither political-economic nor emotional. Wrapped in a paradigm of social responsibility, value creation becomes a quest for aesthetic expressivity and symbolic games within infinite and abstract types of relations.

The acknowledgement of the necessity to account more actively for the natural environment as part of the business environment and as a moral and socio-emotional stakeholder for and in itself brings us to the conclusion that, rather than engaging in functional relationships with organizations, stakeholders in the

hypermodern perspective enter into aesthetic and visually expressed relationships. These relations are volatile and momentary, following the idea of relationships as tribes. According to the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli, we are entering the time of the tribes and thereby entering a new social order; a sociality characterized by disindividuality and the formation of increasingly fluid and unstable social relations in society (Maffesoli 1996). Just like the stakeholder, the tribe is “without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind” (Maffesoli 1996: 98); and just like unstable stakeholder relations, tribes are “characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal” (Maffesoli 1996: 76).

A postmodern stakeholder perspective forefronts the empowerment of the individual and places an analytical interest on the individual stakeholder (being the individual consumer, the media, individual corporate citizens etc.) as the object of study; unlike a hypermodern stakeholder position, which holds an interest in stakeholder interactions and interrelationships as it upholds a disindividuated (or tribal) analytical focus.

From a hypermodern perspective corporations no longer have the control and power to manage or even to meet and simply relate to their stakeholders through appropriate networks and communities. They must recognize that stakeholders are multiple, fluid and infinite, forcing corporations to navigate in uncontrollable situations of decision-making, planning and action.

Summing up, we have demonstrated that stakeholder theory has played an important part in determining the way in which organizations interact with their environment, and more specifically how they conceptualize the relationships with various groups to whom they are closely or distantly related. From a modern perspective stakeholder relationships are framed as a political-economic contractual understanding of what an organization’s value creation is, how it is generated and for whom. Stakeholder models are based on functional and rational transactions, and stakeholder relationships are perceived as stable centric relations between physical actors and the organization as a constant authority. Postmodern spectacles bring a broader perspective on the stakeholder framework in which stakeholder relations have a more network-based structure and the relations between members are more equal and organized around emotional values, offering a more central position for the individual than a modern perspective. Value creation is not only a question of economic contractual understandings; value creation is generated from emotional sense-making interaction between the stake and the individual stakeholders, providing a dyadic focus on relations. Within the perspective of hypermodernity, stakeholder relations draw on aesthetic values, forefronting relations as flows of expressed images between stakeholders: it is about stakeholder positioning and the exchange of images within a dynamic web of non-committal relations.

Entering the City Enterprise

Below, we unfold the city as a complex form of organization and its consequences perceived within the frame of stakeholder theory as presented above, in conceptualizing relational structures. These theoretical generic conceptualizations will be exemplified by an illustrative case, which will be introduced subsequently.

Stakeholder theory covers a wide range of approaches which we have structured within a modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective respectively. Consequently, we might ask how the city emerges from these three stakeholder approaches.

When framing an object within a specific perspective, some features and structures appear more clearly than others. A narrative perspective on the city forefronts tales of the city (cf. Finnegan 1998); while a synergetic perspective highlights the city as a self-organization (cf. Portugali 1999), for instance. Framing the city within a stakeholder perspective makes the city appear in the form of structures and patterns of manifest and latent relations and interests.

When reconfiguring the city within a modern frame of stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984), the city appears in the form of a political-economic enterprise: The city is the sum of its political and economic governance, constituted by stakeholders who affect or are affected within this political and economic centre of power. The city perceived within this modern stakeholder perspective is based on the premise that relations within the city are to be managed, measured and operated as mainstream machinery fuelled on economic power. Hence, we might perceive the city as a structure of oppositional differentiations drawing lines between those who have political-economic power and influence and those who are subordinated to this power, mirroring a classical demarcation between production as power and consumption as eroding what is good for society.

Firat & Venkatesh deliver a cultural critique of modernism and “the modernist distinction between production and consumption and the privileging of production over consumption” (Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 239). They argue that postmodernism is framed by a logic of consumption and emphasize that the consumer is an active producer of self-images in the consumption process (Firat & Schultz 1997; Firat & Venkatesh 1995), constantly striving to construct a coherent narrative of the self (Giddens 1991). Thus, power is primarily performed through consumption, staging the citizen as a consumer-citizen enacting his/her power through consumer behaviour.

Empowerment of the consumer(-citizen) and stakeholders in general is a main characteristic which differentiates a modern from a post- and hypermodern stakeholder perspective on the city: The city’s centre of power has dissolved. The city as static and dyadic relations between a political centre and its stakeholders is transformed into a network of interdependencies and emergent formations. Power is no longer inherent to the city, but is constituted by the amount and quality of relations (cf. Neville & Menguc 2006), forefronting new alliances and stakeholder

synergies (e.g. social partnerships, strategic alliances etc.) Consequently, any clear-cut line between each group of stakeholders is suspended. Using a postmodern approach to stakeholder theory as a frame of reference, the city is constantly emerging as modern (political-economic) and centric values are dissolved into a marketized flux of commodified stakeholder identities (cf. Featherstone 1991; Lury 1996).

Hence, in conceptualizing the city as a postmodern enterprise, power and authority are delegated – the city is individualized. The institutionalized city centre is transformed into a city-scape, inhabited by autonomous individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups, striving to construct their own stakeholder identity.

A hypermodern stakeholder approach to the city redefines the nature of stakeholder relations, which we argue correspond to the notion of tribes (Maffesoli 1996). The concept of tribes opposes the notion of social relations in classical sociological terms and notions of premodern *Gemeinschaft* and modern *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies 1957). In this perspective, post- and hypermodernity are two polarized critiques of modernity; while the postmodern perspective replaces the modern alienation and loss of community by a self-reflexive and autonomous individual, forefronting a non-sociality par excellence, the hypermodern approach reinstalls the individual (and individual stakeholder groups) in new social configurations.

In continuation of the theoretical view on hypermodern stakeholder theory, which instantiates nature as a pivotal point and persistent stakeholder (or stake role), the city enterprise should no longer just be conceptualized as a grand unified whole (cf. a modern perspective) or a fragment inhabited by autonomous stakeholders (cf. a postmodern perspective); instead, it simultaneously manifests itself in volatile gatherings constantly focusing on which role to perform in the emergent web of infinite relations.

If we return to Freeman's core concept of the stakeholder as someone who affects or is affected by an organization's mission, it is necessary to align the concept to the urban context in order to understand how the stakeholder conflates with the "citizen". As we have demonstrated in the section above, the stakeholder concept is conceptualized differently in the modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective respectively. From a modern perspective, stakeholders of the city are conceptualized as sectorized groups that are mapped as generic and established aggregations of members in the city in terms of their public administrative affiliation, e.g. corporations, consumers, the media, NGOs, research and educational institutions etc. conceived as citizen groups. Their stake in the city is their gain or loss from urban life seen from a cost-benefit perspective. In the postmodern scenario stakeholders are specific and fragmented individuals and organizations operating as citizens in urban life. Their stake in the city is concerned with the creation of the authentic self, and is therefore guided by narcissistic and emotional interests. The hypermodern position conceptualizes the stakeholder within a reso-

cialization of individuals and organizations in specific citizen communities and networks of non-sectorial nature (sports groups, women's networks, Facebook groups, etc.) Blurring the boundaries between these groupings and between inner self-reflection and outer appearance, the hypermodern approach opens up for a more non-obligative position than the former approaches. In order to relate in communities and networks, citizens put on (or take off) convenient masks according to the specific roles they perform in these urban settings. The stake in this position is therefore not the benefit or threat represented by the city enterprise, nor the authenticity or emotional self-construction, but the relational and interactional performance of the citizen.

Case presentation: Carbon Neutralizing the City

As a response to the persistent climate-change challenges and with reference to the hosting of the COP15: United Nations Climate Change Conference in Denmark, Copenhagen in December 2009, several Danish cities are endeavouring to become CO₂ neutral within a relatively short period of time. The Municipality of Aarhus has initiated a campaign entitled Aarhus CO₂30, expressing the vision of becoming carbon neutral by the year 2030. 1

The Aarhus CO₂30 initiative was launched at a four-day exhibition (March 2009) in downtown Aarhus which invited citizens to interactively engage in the climate debate (see picture 1).



Picture 1: The CO₂30 exhibition

The exhibition covered a wide range of events and activities, including an interactive game board inviting citizens to actively share their everyday behaviour and constantly face dilemmas in which their own behaviour was measured and compared with other game players depending on its impact on the natural environment (see picture 2).

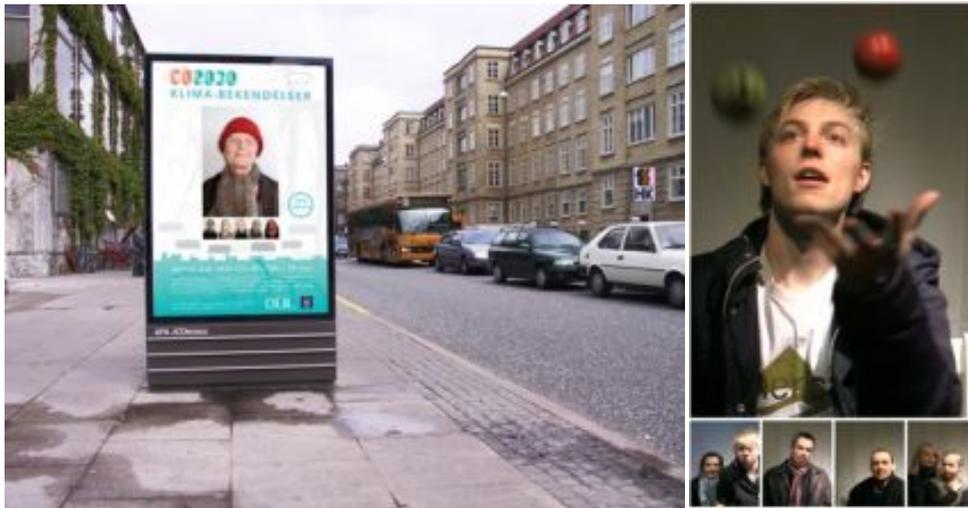


Picture 1 The interactive game board

The CO2030 game has subsequently been on a public city tour and placed at local hot spots (e.g. the city hall, public library etc.) for the use of all. Aesthetic and artistic sound installations, corporate initiatives on sustainable innovations, exhibitions of sustainable designs by educational institutions, and political speeches and public discussion were all an integrated part of the exhibition.

The main feature of the exhibition was the installation Co2nfessions/Co2mmitment which was entirely constituted by citizen-generated content projected onto bus shelters throughout the city of Aarhus and on a large scale using a prominent building in Aarhus as a backdrop.

Co2nfessions/Co2mmitment is an advanced video installation that puts a face on the struggle for climate improvements and gives the citizens of Aarhus a voice to be heard – and seen – throughout the city (cf. www.co2030.dk). In short, the installation features a compartment or cubicle where individuals (and small groups) are invited to “confess” their climate sins and “commit” to future climate-responsible behaviour in front of a digital camera recording their confessions and displaying them on digital screens placed throughout the city (see picture 3)



Picture 3: Co2nfessions / Co2mmitment

In the following section, we will frame the Co2nfessions/Co2mmitment installation within modern, postmodern and hypermodern stakeholder positions, allowing us to grasp the complexity of city life and urban relations, exemplified by the climate-change challenges in urban living.

Stakeholder Mapping the City

Climate change and the complex of problems related to it have challenged urban life. The environment and the climate have been put on the agenda as a primary priority: corporations are met with demands for social responsibility and sustainable productivity; politicians are met with demands for environmental priority, consumers are increasingly addressed with a demand for climate-conscious behaviour (Stohl, Stohl & Townsley 2007; Carroll 2008) etc. In other words: A new actor has entered the stage: Nature. And as an omnipresent force, she sets the agenda for urban life as well as for how to conceptualize urban living. Nature has become a premise of urban life. The Aarhus CO2030 exhibition is a manifestation of the way in which a wide variety of stakeholders enter into complex forms of relations as they negotiate, participate in and make sense of one of the most challenging issues of recent times: how to fight global climate change in a local urban setting.

In this section we will exemplify the different forms of relations, stakeholder interactions and visions as we draw on a modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective, thus illustrating how the complexity of the city can be conceived.

Modern City Relations and Climate Change

A modern stakeholder perspective on the Aarhus CO2030 forefronts Aarhus as a municipal authority and its stakeholders, who are all obliged to take responsibil-

ity; urban life is conceptualized as a life of obligations. Stakeholders are obliged to take part in solving climate problems, not least because these problems can be seen as a result of stakeholders' general abuse of natural resources in the past, causing serious climate damage for the present and the years to come. Participating in neutralizing energy consumption and helping to fight climate change are thus framed as a civic obligation. The more environmental injury citizens are likely to cause, the more they compromise the balance of natural resources and provoke cost-intensive investments in new energy. The stakeholder value in the modern perspective is generated by "good citizenship", which can be unfolded as the actual actions and behaviour of the stakeholders in obeying predefined responsibilities of being concerned for and caring for the climate by engaging themselves in urban and regional agendas. Having set the goal of neutralizing CO₂ emissions by 2030, the Municipality of Aarhus expects its citizens to contribute and cooperate with this climate agenda from a contractual, co-responsible stakeholder perspective, assuming that any stakeholder who has a citizen's rights (e.g. social benefits such as social aids, voting at local elections, having access to public schools, creating a business) must prove themselves willing to engage in civic goals, i.e. neutralizing or reducing energy consumption. Stakeholders legitimate their formal licenses to learn, live and operate in the city by contributing to the climate agenda in Aarhus (e.g. focusing on the issue of climate change in educational institutions, setting up energy plans in industries, getting involved in sustainable living programmes, reducing private energy use etc.) In this respect, the Aarhus CO₂2030 exhibition can be seen as a response to these formal expectations. Citizens' failure to respond to the "glocal" climate agenda enables the local government to resort to legal regulation on energy consumption and carbon footprints, emphasizing the authority and legal power structure within a frame of modern stakeholder theory.

The CO₂2030 case of Aarhus exemplifies this stakeholder accountability to the authorities. Within this perspective, the CO₂nfession/CO₂mmitment box takes on the meaning of a classical confession box with the Municipality of Aarhus representing the civic authority of "power" in control of citizens' absolution. The camera which projects the confessions and commitments plays a crucial role in the metaphorical universe of absolution. It symbolizes the "pastoral authority" of the priest who has the power to give absolution to the confessing citizen, who must publicly confess his sins as a form of penance. Hence, the public transmission and broadcasting of citizen sins becomes the pillory of present times.

A modern notion of stakeholder relations in the city is built upon the philosophy of *quid pro quo*. It is based on mutual understanding and fairness. From a rational economic perspective, the stakeholders of Aarhus are supposed to have mutual interests in responding to the climate challenge by lowering energy consumption because saving energy and being innovative at municipal level also allow individual stakeholders and citizens to lower their own energy costs. Even

though the Municipality of Aarhus is in a position of authority and can set the rules of the climate agenda, the climate project is posed as an exchange of rational stakes, in other words as a win-win project.

Postmodern City Relations and Climate Change

A postmodern stakeholder perspective on the Aarhus CO2030 case constitutes stakeholders as self-reflexive citizens. The stakeholder is not obliged to take action in fighting climate change (cf. the previous section on modern city stakes and actions), but is self-regulated. Actions helping to neutralize energy consumption and fight climate change are reasoned within the individual stakeholder himself. He is not driven by legal regulations or subjugated to any authority ethics, but rather constitutes his own self-righteous ethic. The postmodern self-reflexive stakeholder accounts for his own actions according to his own stake, viz. a constant striving to create and maintain a coherent sense of self; to construct his own identity, whether it is a quest for organizational or corporate identity, individual identity or other stakeholder identity. Climate-conscious actions are rooted in narcissistic motifs.

What is accentuated from a postmodern stakeholder perspective is thus a focus on the dyadic relation between the single stakeholder (individual consumers, the media, government, politicians, organizations, NGOs etc.) and the stake (nature/climate/environment), expressing an interest in how stakeholders make sense of and add meaning to this relationship; not in the sense of duty, but as a virtue.

The case of Aarhus CO2030 demonstrates an interesting aspect of this relation in that it thematizes climate-conscious behaviour as a self-reflexive process, implying that the individual stakeholder constructs his identity based on good deeds; meaning that when the individual stakeholder saves energy as an intentional choice of behaviour, he is simultaneously constructing himself as a caring, responsible and ethical individual, corporation or organization. Hence, nature is transformed into a commodity to mirror yourself in; an extension of the individual or corporate self and hence a resource for providing meaning and coherence for one's self-identity.

When conceptualized within a postmodern frame, the engagement of the city of Aarhus in fighting climate change captures integrative and unifying significance: It is about creating and understanding the organizational self. Climate-conscious initiatives take on inclusive dimensions as they aim at constructing the city around ethical values and responsible self-images, hence including city members within these values: We, as a city, are socially responsible and ethically caring, providing a frame for urban life.

The individual stakeholder of the city (corporate citizens, media citizens, consumer citizens etc.) adopts similar narcissistic motifs in their climate-conscious behaviour as explicated in the CO2mmitment/CO2nfession installation, where individuals are invited to confess their climate sins and commit to future climate-

conscious behaviour. From the perspective of self-reflexivity and self-identity, the installation provides a space for the stakeholder to negotiate his own self; the negotiation is played out as an emotional relation between the individual and the camera, symbolizing one's own guilty climate conscience. The camera becomes a mirror to reflect one's deeds. The confession box thus becomes a mental space for self-reflection and self-negotiation of an ideal and desired self-narrative based on responsible behaviour.

Hypermodern City Relations and Climate Change

From a hypermodern stakeholder perspective, relations in the city are based on expressiveness: actions leading to climate-conscious behaviour are performed in order to stage a certain image for a community of shared beliefs. Whereas the postmodern stakeholder perspective adopts an individual and emotional focus on city relations, a hypermodern perspective upholds an interest in exposed relations: It is about looking good, rather than feeling good. From a hypermodern perspective, ethical actions of being good are conceived as a quest to look good, so the ethical valuation of actions is socially negotiated within specific communities rather than being self-regulated. A hypermodern conceptualization transforms the notion of emotional, identity-seeking citizens into performing citizens who use climate-conscious behaviour as a symbolic resource or commodity for appearance performance.

From a hypermodern perspective the self-reflexivity of the city gains expressive dimensions as the city initiates and organizes climate-change responses in order to exhibit an ethical image. From a market perspective, climate-conscious initiatives are performed as brand values; the city of Aarhus has turned into a climate-conscious brand.

The expressive and stage-performing dimensions of climate-conscious actions, which we argue characterize hypermodern stakeholder relations, are prominent in the case of Aarhus CO2030. The exhibition offers both a way of seeing (i.e. learning and reflecting upon) how to act responsibly according to the norms of ethical behaviour, and a way of being seen, *per se*. The exhibition exhibits the responsible performances of the citizens.

In the case of the CO2nfeffion/CO2mmitment installation, the mental confession box is converted into an online stage for image performance, transforming the intimacy and internal dimensions of self-reflection and construction of self-identity into a focus on exterior relations. Here, the camera symbolizes the community of fellow-citizens in relation to whom citizens constantly stage their good deeds with a view to being recognized and acknowledged as citizens with a good appearance: It looks good to be good. Climate-conscious behaviour is performed and judged according to a socially negotiated code of ethical behaviour. Interestingly, climate-conscious behaviour from this perspective takes on a social and performative character rather than entailing physical environmental consequences.

What is at stake is not the climate but the image of the citizen – or rather: The stakes are intertwined. When enacted front stage and literally when performed online, the citizen puts himself on the line and becomes a part of a social game. This is mostly evident in situations where the image performance is obviously nothing but a performance detached from actual actions. The following example bears witness to this. A young woman enters the confession box along with her 10-year-old child. Listing examples of her own exemplary energy behaviour, the woman stages herself as a responsible mother and citizen. However, this good stand is compromised when her daughter exclaims that the mother’s good deeds are false, hence being nothing but a sugar-coated image performance of ideal good behaviour. The woman exhibits herself – she has not displayed good behaviour but has been exhibited – thereby revealing that citizenship can be a game of civic performance and role play.

The Stakeholder Concept and Urban Living

When approaching the city from the three perspectives of stakeholder theory, opposing notions of the citizen, of citizenship and of relations emerge, as summarized in table 1.

	Modern stakeholder perspective on urban living	Postmodern stakeholder perspective on urban living	Hypermodern stakeholder perspective on urban living
The city metaphorically	Machine	Network of autonomic individuals	Infinite network of performed roles
Stakeholder focus	Centric: the authoritarian city	Fragmented: the individual citizen	Re-socialized: the expressive citizen
Conceptualizing stakeholders as	Obligated citizens	Self-reflexive citizens	Performing citizens
Conceptualizing the relational bond as	Contractual	Emotional	Performative
Stakeholder value	Living up to good citizenship	Creating a coherent self identity	Staging and performing an image
Stakeholder vision	Being good (duty)	Feeling good (virtue)	Looking good (aesthetic)
Ethical legitimacy	Authority ethic	Self-righteous ethic	Socially negotiated ethic

Table 1: Three conceptual stakeholder perspectives on urban living

The case of Aarhus CO2030 has exemplified the complexity of urban life and emphasized that these relational complexities, oppositional structures and stake interests all exist simultaneously. Citizens are conceived of as parts of both empowered and obliged relational structures; they are both peripheral, being affected by an authoritarian agenda, and the main characters in creating their own personal storyline. They chase emotional coherence and meaning as well as performing non-committal role play.

A post- and hypermodern perspective on the case of Aarhus CO2030 illustrates stakeholder sovereignty and authority as the stakeholder enacts his own individual

agenda, i.e. self-identity constructions and image performance, thus framing climate-conscious behaviour within a discourse of emotional and casual relations respectively. Urban actions leading to climate change are nothing but narcissistic games and role playing. The individual stakeholder is liberated to perform climate-conscious actions according to his own agenda – and is empowered to formulate his own agenda. From a postmodern perspective, the individual holds himself responsible for his own actions, discursively constituting the citizens as autonomous, self-regulated and liberated stakeholders. From a hypermodern perspective, the individual stakeholder is responsible for his behaviour according to a non-committal social game.

Hence, a post- and hypermodern stakeholder perspective on actions for climate change in an urban context emphasizes relational behaviour framed within a discourse of empowerment and stakeholder sovereignty. However, a modern stakeholder approach challenges this notion as the stakeholder is subordinate to the demands of an authority, formulated in this case by the Municipality of Aarhus. Hence, the stakeholder is subject to an obligation of ethical behaviour and thereby inscribed in a stakeholder map of citizen responsibilities and ethical duties. From this perspective, actions for climate change as a means of identity construction and image performance do not demonstrate stakeholder empowerment but rather ways of coping with citizen obligations.

Concluding Remarks

Stakeholder management has gained terrain in businesses, research and education since the mid-1980s, with an increasing impact on how private and public corporations are conceived and governed. The conceptualization of stakeholder management from three perspectives has proved useful for two reasons.

Firstly, focusing on the relational aspect of managing organizations, stakeholder management helps us to grasp the complexity of relations and networks which imbue organizations of all kinds in the age of globalization (Castells 2001). For the same reason, stakeholder management reached beyond business research and practice a long time ago, and is now recognized in many areas including urban studies and sectors such as public and non-profit organizations. Consequently, it is natural to consider “the city” as a complex corporation that needs appropriate models of business excellence in order to respond to citizen stakeholders’ needs, expectations and obligations.

From an urban governance perspective, the classical stakeholder approach to conceptualizing the city seems to offer a fruitful entry point to consider the functional structures and systems of relations between urban stakeholders and citizens, while a postmodern and hypermodern approach allows us to focus on the playing, image constructive and performance-creative dimensions of these relations as an integrative part of urban life.

As emphasized above, the adoption of the three different approaches to conceptualizing the city is not an attempt to analyze urban life within an evolutionary framework. Rather than describing an evolutionary process, we have attempted to illustrate the way in which the types of relations between citizens co-exist, enrich and supplement each other, ranging from binary resource-dependent relations to inner, intimate relations with one's self and performing and stage-setting relations between and among citizens. The triple conceptualization thus enables us not only to identify types of functional relationships between citizens. It also seems to offer a platform for nuancing different types of relationships and being sensitive to contradictory relationships and stakes in the city.

Second, the concept of "stake" has proved to be relevant in the sense that it encompasses a wide range of individual stakeholders' agendas, interests, needs, expectations and desires with which a municipality is faced. Business corporations, higher education and research institutions, local NGOs and the media do not necessarily have common interests, needs, expectations and obligations in the fight against climate change. For instance, when researchers at the Centre for Digital Urban Living at Aarhus University chose to cooperate with the Municipality of Aarhus by setting up a confession box at the climate exhibition in the city hall, this should not alone be conceived as an obligation and co-responsible initiative for citizens to fight climate as a goal for an in itself. Furthermore, this initiative becomes a means of staging the act of seeking support and funding opportunities vis-à-vis members of the municipality in another type of discourse-relational setting in which researchers must use impression management strategies in order to receive grants to do their research. Similarly, the fact that large corporations have volunteered for the climate project by giving presentations, setting up installations, offering free consultancy on energy reduction, etc. does not only reflect their eagerness to live up to their climate obligation. It is also a performance aimed at gaining influence in the political environment and a means of stimulating their image and reputation in the eyes of local government members. Finally, the initiative does not only involve consumers complying with their civic obligations by using less energy. It is also important that consumers reflect on how, why and for whom they are staging themselves as good citizens in terms of energy consumption.

As shown above, it has not been our intention to make a detailed analysis of the relationships and types of relations established around the Aarhus CO2030 case. The case has only been introduced as an illustration of how a multifaceted stakeholder approach to conceptualizing a complex system such as a city can serve as a productive framework for understanding how citizens approach urban living. However, future research on stakeholding the city must be undertaken in order to produce empirical evidence of the value and contribution of our conceptual framework, and to generate further insights into how stakeholder relations are constructed, maintained and dissolved in a setting of urban living.

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Notes

- 1 Aarhus is the second-largest city in Denmark with a population of more than 300,000, of whom approximately 13 per cent attend higher or further education courses. This makes Aarhus at heart the youngest city in Denmark, which is reflected in a rich and varied cultural and business life, characterized by innovation and new thinking. For instance, Aarhus has the largest concentration of important media enterprises and higher education institutions in Denmark. These characteristics are communicatively embraced by the city's core brand value, which is "Pulse". In relation to climate, Aarhus has been made the Energy Town of 2009 by the Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy, thereby serving as an innovative front runner with regard to the climate. The city of Aarhus has previously taken initiatives and acted as a front runner in responding to climate and environmental challenges, e.g. by initiating public campaigns such as "Clean City".

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Locating Intermediality: Socialization by Communication and Consumption in the Popular-Cultural Third Places of the Music Club and Football Stadium¹

By Christoph Jacke

Abstract

Based on two different case studies in the realm of popular culture, my contribution will clarify the mechanisms involved in the (symbolic) production and consumption of space. The music club and the soccer stadium function much in the same way, as interfaces between producers and consumers of places, prompting “pro-sumption of space” (*Raumprosumenten*). A loss of function in such “third places” cannot be linked to the transition from informal cellar clubs to (soberly designed) regional discos outside the city – or from the national-league stadium to the World Cup arena (also outside the city). Nor can it be attributed to the mediatization of these spaces by technology. On the contrary, we find an exponentiation of what third places had always already been, spaces of “intermediality” (between work and leisure, between seriousness and play, between young people and adults). In the World Cup stadium, unique events, experiences and communicative propensities are produced in a highly consistent manner by means of communication on different levels in series. In such cases, the spectators in the stadium, just like visitors to music clubs, rarely behave as passive consumers of what is staged, yet both groups contribute by their presence and symbolic activity to the success of such productions in the stadium and the club.

Keywords: Communication, consumption, stadium, club, mediatization, third places, Localizing Intermediality

Locating Intermediality: Socialization by Communication and Consumption in the Popular-Cultural Third Places of the Music Club and Football Stadium

In an email interview with curator Doris Rothauer on the occasion of the art project “Third Places” against the backdrop of the 2004 *steirischer herbst* festival, the American sociologist Ray Oldenburg explains his criticism of consumer worlds such as Disneyland or the shopping malls: These have no value for the social in a society, but are merely servants of consumption, in stark contrast to something like the good old marketplace.

Disneyworld and -land, and American shopping malls in addition, are designed to discourage interaction between customers. As the primary activity of third places is interaction, the contrast could hardly be more extreme. ... Marketplaces have social as well as monetary value but shopping malls have no social value (Oldenburg/Rothauer 2004: 17).

Oldenburg (1999) had made similar arguments in his much-discussed study on those “third places”. Those third places – mediated by the many little episodes of personal interactions between guests, mediated by dialogue as well as visual contact, by bar-room slogans as well as sophisticated conversation – they are symbolic and signifying forms and worlds of socialization, mediated by communications of all kinds, thus fulfilling a social objective. Oldenburg was thinking thereby of little corner bars, local cafés or the old established bookstore, at whose sofa table one looks at new books after work or on Saturday and in the process starts talking with other customers or especially with the local book dealer—and not only about the new novel by Umberto Eco. Now, one does not have to be a social romantic like Oldenburg or the son of a bookseller to be able to observe and describe such third places. What Oldenburg defines as third places of socialization between family and work as well as their modes of socialization have changed over time. Here types of (mediatized) communication play a large role, so it seems like a proper thing for scholars of communication and media culture to deal with these places and their symbolic transformations. Changes can clearly be observed in the old third places as in new third places that have developed and proven themselves in the course of the media’s evolution and that are increasingly interconnected with media products.² Not only coffee houses, pubs, etc. mentioned by Oldenburg are meeting places for getting informed and communicating. There are also commercialized, professionalized, and institutionalized third places such as shopping malls or theme parks, as Gernot Böhme (2001) has noted, which are sensed directly, theatricalized and stage-managed – but as something much greater than purely pragmatic, socially insignificant collection sites for goods.³

Oldenburg’s focus was on sites that were not at first centered on classical shopping. If we want to discuss Oldenburg’s ideas in current contexts and possibly make them productive, a social domain presents itself that (to some extent)

meanders back and forth between those old third places (the beer garden, pub, the café) transfigured nostalgically by Oldenburg and those sharply condemned “centers of commerce”: *popular culture*. Heavily consumer-oriented and increasingly commercialized and mediatized, virtually provoking communication, necessitating communication from conversation to entertainment and (in the truest sense of the term) space-appropriating – all these things comprise popular culture. In the following, this domain will first be described more precisely as our underlying field of investigation. Then, using the examples of the popular-cultural place of music club and football stadium, we will work out different modes of communication, mediatization and commercialization, describing the structural transformation of third places. These thoughts will finally be summarized in the conclusion to the essay.

Popular Culture as a Field of Third Places

Here we understand popular culture as that commercialized social domain that produces content in industrial fashion and that is conveyed by the mass media and by numerically predominant groups – no matter what stratum or class they belong to – and that gets used with pleasure and processed further in the form of new self-produced media products (see Jacke 2004: 21). The agents of popular culture are under a great deal of pressure to innovate, and thus under time pressure as well. In mass-medial communication, this applies on the level of production and distribution as well as that of reception and processing. Agents in popular culture are particularly imaginative in matters of the economy of attentiveness – driven by the mainstream and the dissidence necessary to it, i.e., by the ongoing, procedural opposition between innovation and tradition.⁴

Both the commodification of subjects, objects and actors in popular culture and the strategies and tactics involved in the everyday production and reception of communication products are what make popular culture so appealing today to researchers on motivation, marketing and advertising (see de Certeau 1988). Popular culture, especially in the advertising and consumption industries, serves as a seismograph for developments across society (see Jacke 2005, 2006). The continuous *interplay* between production and consumption, between art and commerce, and the intermingling of these levels – all this is typical in popular culture and all this forms and necessitates places which not only resemble Oldenburg's transfigured third places but also those similarly defined transitional places that French anthropologist Marc Augé (1994) has compellingly described.

Popular culture takes place as an “compulsory elective event” [*Wahlpflichtveranstaltung*] (Keller 2003: 116), as a completely serious game, a momentous simulation or pioneering exercise. Popular-cultural places are particularly well suited to experimentation that is social, to trying out consumption and communication. Here boundaries can be tested and transferred: third places “are commer-

cial institutions that combine shopping, dining and entertainment in targeted fashion, blurring existing boundaries between high, popular and consumer culture” (Weh 2004: 31). As a result, the curator of the aforementioned art project “Third Places” sees these places themselves as a metaphor “for the trend toward event culture even in the field of art [and] for the convergence of high and low culture, of elite art and everyday culture” (Rothauer 2004: 9). Processes of demarcation and exclusion take place here as elsewhere by means of communication, in spite of Oldenburg’s fears.

Popular culture, as it is understood in the present essay, can only be thought of in connection with (mass) media and is thus framed in terms of media culture (for more detail, see Jacke 2004). Contrary to widespread reservations about *this* form of culture, mass-mediated popular culture is not necessarily associated with passivity on the part of its consumers. Consumption and reception can also be production, or re-production. And even those who just seem to be simply subjected to it *can* possibly do so in an active way, that is, tuning in in order to tune out.⁵

When the British cultural scholar John Storey (2003a: 148) speaks, for instance, about “[s]hopping as popular culture”, this means that shopping is actively fun and that it can even be processed subversively, but in any event it is pursued and experienced *with others*. On the one hand, the mode of socialization changes in its assessment of indoctrination (“Buy or die!”) toward a socially-oriented organization of the self (“Express yourself!”). On the other hand, the mode of consumption itself undergoes a shift. We are not merely asked “to buy what is on sale but to consume the public space” (Storey 2003a: 150). This consumption of popular-cultural places is highly concerned with communication. Opportunities to do so are clearly provided by media, and consumers go on to process these in completely different ways and at different levels of productivity.⁶ Here, not only *what* is consumed but also the *way* it is consumed, is constitutive of identities.

Consumption is a significant part of the circulation of shared and conflicting meanings we call culture. We communicate through what we consume. Consumption is perhaps the most visible way in which we stage and perform the drama of self-formation. In this sense, then, consumption is also a form of production (Storey 2003b: 78).

Storey’s account must be supplemented by our present deliberations: “We communicate by how we consume!” And this mode of consumption always played an important role in the construction of identities – both individually and collectively – at third places. Even in the corner bar or bookstore (to follow Oldenburg), there is a balancing of socialization between individuality and sociality, between private and public spheres, between inclusion and exclusion (along the categories of age, gender, class, group, etc.). In short, it is a matter of constructing identity. “The imaginative hedonism of the urban setting in its theatricality is employed as a way to stage-manage oneself. . . . Urban ‘third places’ today serve less as places of communication than as stages for cultivating one’s image”(Gau 2004: 26). Such a self-presentation, however, occurs precisely in the bookstore as well

as in the football stadium by means of a communicative orientation to others. Images can only be created by communication and are not “swallowed up” by or at places. In such a way, constructing and cultivating images are highly communicative processes, particularly on the practice fields of popular culture.

An extremely productive, pop-cultural processing of third place communication offerings takes place in the person of those non-professional experts in image-making and social orientation, i.e., the fans who receive, consume, use and modify media goods. In his ethnographic study, Henry Jenkins (1992), following Michel de Certeau (1988), has identified ten creative ways how various fan groups process media products: recontextualization, temporal extension, character-refocusing, moral distortion, genre-switching, crossing-over, character-positioning, personalization, emotionalization, and eroticization. Clearly, not exactly every fan is a productive or even subversive *bricoleur*, as suggested by many of the fan studies emerging out of Cultural Studies. With respect to de Certeau’s ideas, the literary scholar Jörg Dünne (2006: 300) reminds us: “It is nonetheless critical to ask whether everyday spatial practices can only be conceived as supporting existing orders and whether they cannot be assigned at least a constitutive function in relation to spatial order.” Even Storey (2003a) explicitly points out that not every recipient is capable of dealing independently with media products:

Consumption, therefore, is always an encounter between the materiality of a cultural commodity and the cultural formation of a consumer, which takes place in a particular context. Whether the outcome is manipulation or resistance, or a complicated mixture of the two, is a question which cannot be answered in advance of the actual encounter (Storey 2003b: 112).

In the person of the fan, then, producer and consumer come together.⁷ Fans are in some sense “extreme consumers”, and perhaps this is what makes them so interesting (not only) from the viewpoint of sociology of consumption.

Two pop-cultural third places that until now have hardly been illuminated in communication or media studies are examples well-suited for illustrating our observations: the music club and the football stadium. Both places function similarly, as interfaces between seller and customer, between producer and consumer (typically as a fan) and between anonymous industry (control, public sphere) and individual needs (imagination, private sphere). They thus represent a relevant field of investigation for an analysis oriented on Oldenburg and de Certeau.⁸ Are there opportunities for authentic interaction only in the basement club and not in a large disco, only in the regional stadium and not in the World Cup arena? Below, we will take a more exact look at these places, their specific media and their opportunities for collectivity (socialization / communalization / control) and individuality (self-imagination / self-control).⁹

The Music Club

An almost prototypical popular-cultural place of intermediality [*das Dazwischen*] and consequently of mediation is the music club. In general, we are talking about clubs or (formerly) discos, regardless (for the present) what style of music is being played or performed there.¹⁰ Clubs or even “clubbing” (most comparable with the rather subdued term *ausgehen* in German) are places and activities positioned between diverse poles. With respect to time, people move in clubs between day and night (and day), between work and sleep, between the private and the public (materially and spatially). Socially, people move between being alone, with friends and in intimate anonymity (“we know each other”) as well as between having it together (“sober”) and not having it together (“ecstatic”): “This is resistance found through losing your self, paradoxically to find your self” (Malbon 1998: 281). Clubs are, in a manner of speaking, institutionalized places of the ephemeral. The British geographer and promoter Ben Malbon (1998, 1999) in his studies on clubbing sees them as compensating for the loss of socializing in public places or for those places having generated non-places (the end of the market square): “Public spaces in the city often seem designed more for traveling through than for socializing within – more fleeting spaces than meeting places” (Malbon 1998: 267). Clubs, however, hold onto these travelers for a few hours without fixating the visitors. However, what Guido Zurstiege (2008) has shown in his essay on shopping malls also applies to clubs: that efforts involving a great deal of personnel and media are needed to create the illusion of an atmospheric club flow.¹¹ The clubs themselves are equally fleeting, but nonetheless make stopovers again and again, orienting themselves to trends and every few months moving around Berlin to new locations (e.g., the WMF Club) as Anja Schwanhäuser (2005) and Geoff Stahl (2007) have documented in subcultural movements and their “spatialization” [*Verräumungen*] (as meant by Christian Schwarzenegger [2008]). The communities formed there may only meet temporarily, but they do so in serial fashion.

The music played there has a decisive influence on the club atmosphere as the basis of various types of consumption (alcohol, tobacco, drugs of all kinds, media products, sound, and communication). Or again in the words of Malbon: “Yet in each case, it is the ability of music (and sound more generally) to create an *atmosphere* (an emotionally charged space) which is of crucial importance, for it is largely this atmosphere that the clubbers consume” (Malbon 1998: 271). This music, the sound of a club, is responsible for the framing of the atmospheric mentioned by Böhme. In these ways, in fact, popular music has structured and marked even public spaces and thus itself has become an everyday phenomenon.¹² At the same time, music is the most important media product of the club in three respects:

1. *Narrative machines and the prompting of subsequent communications:* As an unending fabric of constantly renewed and repeated narrations, which many people take part in (see Gauber 2006), the sounds and their stories animate consumption on the dance floor, but possibly afterwards as well, in the repeated consumption of tracks or songs near the dance floor and at home. They provide the basis in theme parks or temples of consumption that is necessary for making the “shopping machines” into less suspecting “narrative machines” and their production of non-binding reality landscapes (see Legnaro/Birenheide 2005).
2. *Communicative relief:* As a release from unreasonable demands, exciting sounds also reduce one-track conversations, thus relieving people from making small-talk, with the help of dancing: “Shake your booty!” “Dancing might be seen as an embodied statement by the clubber that they will not be dragged down by the pressures of work, the speed and isolation of the city, the chilly interpersonal relations one finds in many of the city's social places” (Malbon 1998: 271).
3. *Social Orientation:* Finally, the sounds serve as a way of reducing complexity, by suggesting a (often) clearly defined path through the nocturnal music jungle: Here they are playing minimal techno and not heavy metal, etc. It is mainly by consuming music in specific clubs that rather distinct groups of visitors emerge, making the situation a communicative interplay of various actors. “The clubbers consume each other – the clubbing crowd contains both the producers and the consumers of the experience and the clubbers are consuming a crowd of which they are a part; the club space comes to resemble a scene ‘in which everyone is at once both actor and spectator’” (Malbon 1998: 277).

Besides the central media product, music, there are other media offered in the various clubs. And these media are important in subsequent communications: the flyer about the next party the same evening, the schedules of the other clubs, the posters of the coolest concerts, the visuals, or the flickering television screens with music clips, movies or announcements of upcoming events.

In the way these media products are made available, we can see how the disconnection of production from consumption, in the course of role differentiation (as noted by Kai-Uwe Hellmann [2004]), is turned upside down when the distinction company / household is made. In the club, producer and consumer become completely intertwined in individual persons. While still a consumer (for example) of a long drink, one is already in subsequent communication a producer in the form of a DJ, dancer, or storyteller. In short, clubs appear to be almost typical

hubs for what Hellmann (2004: 146) calls second-order consumption in the marketplace of subtle differences:

Consumption culture is thus characterized by a replication of needs and wishes, which successively undermine every expectation of resistance and finiteness and which increasingly move the moment of fantasy and stimulation into the foreground of orientation (Hellmann 2004: 151).

What would probably have to be discussed is Hellmann's suggestion that we no longer talk about subcultures but more generally about consumption culture since the first term is not confronted by a dominant culture:

What speaks, however, against speaking at all about *subcultures* of consumption is the lack of a dominant culture without which there can be no subcultures. Because what nearly all forms of consumption we encounter nowadays have in common is that they involve second-order consumption. This is evident especially with Harley-Davidson riders, who are thoroughly acting in front of an audience, of the ingroup as well as the outgroup. To that extent, all (sub)cultures of consumption reflect at once this central feature of the prevailing consumption culture. For this reason, it is clear that we should be talking about consumption cultures, just as on the production side we are talking about company cultures (Hellmann 2004: 153).

Along with Storey (2003a, 2003b), Schrage (2003) and Jacke (2004), we could introduce this dominance in the form of mass media and mass culture "as a compensatory means of preventing a potential revolution, as a cultural dislocation, or as a cultural democratization" (Schrage 2003: 66). Within this dominance, however, reorderings are again possible. And even the sociologist of space, Martina Löw (2001, 2008), confirms in her pioneering studies that the spatial creation of specific institutionalized order(ing)s is an event that runs counter to the dominant culture and is thus countercultural. Particularly with regard to music clubs, such subcultural "spatializations" [*Verräumungen*] are fundamental; particularly these are constantly working on the spatial, social and communicative inclusion and exclusion of certain groups.

Especially with respect to socialization in clubs, there is the matter of being there ("in the house!") or being outside ("out of bounds!"). This boundary is mediated by clothing, sounds, drugs, and (if nothing else) the bouncer. Within these consumption cultures, there are (in Hellmann's sense) very likely subcultural as well as countercultural groups that are quite easy to identify, which distinguish themselves from each other or also from whatever is mainstream, thus actualizing themselves themselves in the course of the movement itself. Hence, the *Love Parade* in Berlin, at one time a demonstration, has been differentiated as a changing club into a commercialized large-scale event ("alone together"). In reaction to it, there are individualizing markets from which we can distinguish some smaller counter-movements with stronger group character, such as the *Fuck Parade* or *Hate Parade*. The playful rivalries go on to become further differentiated in *sub-* and *main branches* within cultures of consumption.¹³

For precisely these changes, clubs are essential observational platforms. How resistant, for example, a musical style and (in relation to it) a club itself can be

depends on the management of latently changing products by the music industry as well as the expressed needs of club visitors. In short, everything depends on differences in popular-social trends.¹⁴ Consumers in clubs appear especially oriented to consuming consumption as a presentation platform for the self and the collective:

It is here, in this creation of a space of their town, that we find resistance, not as a struggle with a dominant, hegemonic culture ... or even as the fact of clubbing itself, but resistance as located in the most minute subtleties of clubbing, the ways of clubbing – its *arts de faire* (Malbon 1998: 280).

If, following de Certeau (1988), we look at these kinds of everyday (consumption) activities as potentially subversive on the micro-political level, then we can understand Malbon's argumentation (not atypical for Cultural Studies) that there are uprisings on the small scale. Clubs seem predestined for such alliances and struggles. There identities that are collectively oriented and individually constructed can repeatedly be tried out and tried on in a playful manner. In the club, as a space full of signs and itself a sign, everything begins with the "I" on the dance floor (see Bonz 2006) – and, going beyond Malbon's arguments, not only on a small scale such as dancing to a single song, but also in continuously constructing both one's own and the group's identity.¹⁵

Music clubs, as we can maintain provisionally and generally, are third places where consumption and communication are regularly taking place in very different ways, although both types of activity are motivated by media products around the nucleus of music. At the same time, there is both a trend to serialize music clubs, thus building in every town or county a regional disco, making it predictable and available, as well as an opposing trend of opening individual, highly specialized clubs for a short time (and sometimes illegally), where it is not at all clear to outsiders what exactly goes on in these places. Each one clearly has a different clientele. But especially in contrast to the domestic consumption of music in the living room, both possibilities appear to possess high levels of ritualization and physical presence. These "generate effects of a corporeal grammaticalization (a limited number of rules producing an infinity of forms, all of which share certain basic characteristics)", as the literary scholar Hans U. Gumbrecht (1998: 202) has observed concerning the consumption of American football in the stadium and on television. Gumbrecht's reflections can be applied both to music clubs as well as to football stadiums,¹⁶ thus addressing our second example of popular-cultural third places.

The Football Stadium

The link with ritual in Gumbrecht's argument and with the productivity of fans in Storey's and Malbon's thinking is made in the following detailed passage by Roman Horak (2004: 56f.), the Austrian scholar of culture and the sociology of art,

in reference to Chas Critcher's (1976) early social-scientific studies on "supporters" (football fans) in the 1970s:

In terms of football, a member of the supporters . . . is classically someone who sympathizes and suffers with his club in victory and defeat. To him, it is not just a familiar ritual (though it is also that) to attend regularly the games of "his" club on site (at the stadium); it is also one of his obligations. Yet he sees the players of "his" club as equally obligated, if not to win every game then at least to do everything possible for the success of the common institution (of the "Rapid" [working-class football club in Vienna, CJ], for example) and to make the greatest possible effort. The customer, however, is someone who is not familiar with a club that he says he belongs to. To him, the main thing is a great game, some action in the *Fankurve* [the section with the wildest fans, CJ] or – perhaps – the atmosphere in the football stadium. If not granted what he wishes for, he can switch clubs, sports or his leisure behavior in general. . . . For the consumer, the spectacle of football is one among many; the disappointment experienced by customers is not something he knows, other than at best dissatisfaction with the product offered. He makes choices – if at all possible – according to rational categories.

The distinction first made by Critcher and taken up here by Horak between fans, customers, and consumers can be applied to current observations in football stadiums, such as those of the German National Football League [*Bundesliga*]. The visitor type of fan, the classical "kutte wearing fan" [*Kuttenträger-Fan*]¹⁷ is being pushed aside by new types of visitors such as families and business customers, who are becoming increasingly important to the marketing departments of the clubs.¹⁸ Overall, the way we deal with football has changed, as described for example by Horak (2004: 57). Football has long since become a part of popular culture,¹⁹ and in this respect, the stadium is also a place of communication, of media production (as a space full of signs and itself a sign) and, in general, of intermediality [*das Dazwischen*].

Just like music and sound in the club, the game in the stadium also forms both the frame and center of the atmospheric: "In fact, the events on the pitch, in the grandstands and in the media behave like a foreign body against the background of our cultural and political institutions. It is a strange world in the midst of our everyday life" (Gebauer 2006: 9). Here, too, visitors are immersed in a completely different environment in which they can try on – and try out – many things. Here, too, identities are performed even if they are more clearly defined than in the club.²⁰ Otherwise, we are falling into the role of the unpopular neutral or undecided observer – "The main thing is a great game!"

In temporal terms, the premier league matches (as is well-known) mainly occur on Saturday afternoon – right between the beginning of the weekend / last work-day of the week and Sunday as a family day. Materially and spatially, football stadiums are the intermediality [*das Dazwischen*] between living room, bar and sports pitch. And socially, they operate as institutions between players / clubs and fans / spectators as well as between family, friends, fans and foes: "What? You're a *Bayern* fan?"

Horak (2004: 61ff.) speaks of three different games that are taking place when one is watching a football game: the actual game, the game on the grandstand and the televised game. The interaction between these three levels helps results in the formation of temporary “communities” and a sense of active participation on the part of fans, customers and consumers:

Here [when attending a football match in the stadium, CJ], between mutual joy or outrage, shared sorrow, despair and hope (on the one hand) and ironic detachment or self-distancing (on the other), there are small private spheres fed by two sources: the certainty of a time limit – a game does not last much longer than 90 minutes – and the shared hope of being able collectively to shape the game on the green pitch (Horak 2004: 60f.).

In the football stadium, new trends become visible among fans. In addition, this place is both a reflection of and a trendsetter for larger societal developments between subversion and commercialization. The good old stadium is full of stories that have to be discovered [*gefunden*], or at least re-covered [*wieder-gefunden*] in their commercialized manifestation:²¹ “What is businesslike organizes the framework in which private emotions can thrive. Football today is a business world, inside of which emotions seethe” (Gebauer 2006: 133). These feelings as well as the actions that articulate them are increasingly stimulated by media products.

The major attention in the football stadium may still hinge on the ball and the players. Yet there are, especially in the new arenas, more and more media products before, after, and during the game. On closer inspection, the following three aspects fulfill the functions already named in the case of the music club:

1. *Narrative machines and the prompting of subsequent communications:* From a club’s magazine to fan merchandise, from jerseys to the big screen / scoreboard, stories are narrated and repeated, such as those about a club’s tradition (“Borussia Moenchengladbach”) or the stars (“Michael Ballack to Chelsea?”). Yet besides the image-building associated with them, these stories also motivate the buying of more tickets, fan memorabilia and ultimately the products or services of sponsors.
2. *Communicative relief:* At the same time, media products tied to a club and its players provide relief from unreasonable communicative demands. People are basically in agreement, and nothing requires a great deal of negotiation, even if one must agree to disagree. In addition, attending a football game in the stadium can be a release (to a certain extent) from social labeling – “here I can let it all hang out!”
3. *Social Orientation:* Lastly, in the football stadium as well, complexity is greatly reduced by the game along with its intertwined media products. And communication is ritualized: we know that there is one’s own, the

other team, and the (as already noted) less pleasurable option of staying neutral.

Against this background, consumption and the socialization associated with it takes place on different levels of consumption cultures. “Even if the football community is a distorting mirror, it shows the contours of social formations that allow experiences of self and community to emerge that are different from those in ordinary life” (Gebauer 2006: 63). Football, this means, is popular culture.

Unlike feared, the individual does not disappear either in the *Allianz Arena* or in the *Love Parade*. The spectators, customers and consumers – and certainly the fans – are concerned with the articulation of the self and less with its disappearance. In the stadium as in the club, the articulation of the individual always takes place in groups and is communicated through signs and symbols, which is why it is socially monitored. For this reason, every attempt (including even the most risky) at trying out a new role, every impulsive acting out of repressed emotions, takes place in a safe setting. Again, this has not been lost in the wake of the ongoing commercialization of football, in spite of all the prophecies of doom.

In the stadium itself, there are a variety of possibilities for realizing oneself individually and being integrated socially (see Legnaro/Birenheide 2005). Besides the traditional division into football players and spectators, (in a sense) into actors on the stage and recipients in the audience as well as into the familiar us versus them – and hence into various supporter and fan groups (not by chance, people used to speak of fan *communities*), there are additional differentiations within and across groups. What twenty years ago distinguished specific groups of fans in *Bundesliga* stadiums – standing room or in seats, single- or season-ticket holders or groups in bulk seating – is now even more strongly distinguished by different areas in the new arenas. Between normal seating and VIP lounge areas (including full service meals), there are more than subtle differences. The customers and consumers mentioned by Critcher and Horak appear to have access to other areas within the stadium than the fans.

As a result, the stadium audience today coalesces only rarely into a community as in the case of the 2006 World Cup – “Thank you, Germany!” Furthermore, the stadium as a third place increasingly offers space for very different motives to communicate. No longer does the arena – as Gunter Gebauer (2006) describes it with surprising nostalgia in his “poetics of football” – belong to the fans. By means of fan representatives, blogs, and other initiatives, these express themselves (even protest) against the expropriation of “their” football by commercialization on the part of club leadership, sponsors and the stadium management.²² It was not just a ticket shortage during the aforementioned World Cup that led the often talked about “public viewings” of the games to become a new form of collectivity to those football fans and friends who were left outside (see Rötzer 2006):

Sports and the media are ... linked in a special way, by requiring or generating a technological means of mass dissemination that increasingly compress social communication. The same applies to early printing and photography, then (to a great extent) for film, radio, television and (more recently) the Internet (Leggewie 2006: 114f.).

These media products have not for a long time been just about football itself – stadiums are enormous narrative machines (see Legnaro/Birenheide 2005):

A new stadium as a gigantic entertainment machine for the whole family, for the whole weekend if possible. According to this concept, football is only the occasion for multimedia recreation in one's free time – for entertainment products, sale of memorabilia, for advertising and "experience shopping". In an architecture completely focused on emotions, the ideal of the shopping mall predominates, for which many spectators are needed with a lot of money and a lot of enthusiasm (Gebauer 2006: 131).

In their presentations [*Inszenierungen*], stadiums, clubs and of course players – in the meantime, even referees and spectators – become part of the presentation [*Inszenierung*] and ultimately a brand: "The Red Devils from the Betzenberg." Yet this has nothing to do with passivity on the part of spectators: "From football and popular culture, young people obtain experiences of voluntarily assumed obligations even if these make a superficial and ridiculous impression on their environment" (Gebauer 2006: 111). In consideration of these obligations, real (but also imaginary) communities develop out of many individual egos by means of cognitive, communicative and (very importantly) affective negotiations. These consolidations happen on the spot and are "live on TV". But they cannot take place on site or "live on TV" in cases of "public viewing" at home in the living room or when recounting past games.

Even football stadiums, we can confirm at this point, are "third places" in which consumption and communication transpire differently today than in the past. And football stadiums also generate unique events in series. Furthermore, the new, large arenas (particularly) represent places where an organizational balancing act takes place between originality and seriality. Much here appears to be organized in a highly professional manner, clearly foreseeable and ritualized, and yet every game is a new and completely unpredictable one. The next opposing team can be the occasion for unplanned surprises, just as the next DJ can make a night at the music club completely different from the last.

Conclusion

The socializing of individuals via communication and consumption ought to be undeniable for the two examples discussed here of clubs and stadiums. Communication, consumption, and socialization are changing in these places precisely to the extent that these places themselves are also changing in the course of their ongoing commercialization. However, this "structural and symbolic transformation of third places" does not automatically lead to a comprehensive loss of func-

tion or even the disappearance of these places as prophesied by Oldenburg. The representations discussed above should have made clear what Oldenburg's third places and so-called "non-places" have in common. In both, room for *play* in perception and action is enlarged and restricted, although in the case of non-places those spaces are clearly made standard and anonymous (temporally, materially, and socially).

Do music clubs and stadiums *of today* somehow represent the other "culturally pessimistic" side of the media coin, the predecessors of which were less standardized, more intimate places with "better" opportunities for socialization? "No" would be the preliminary answer: Neither standardization nor mediatization *destroy* these places. And the individuals and groups who visit them cannot fundamentally be understood as cheerful but unreflective consumers in the sense of Mathias Stuhr's "cheerful economy" (2003).

The media revolutionize third places. Yet they do away with them just as little as they do away with (often criticized) commerce, instead making them "only" more into what they always already were: places of entertainment, communication, consumption and socialization.

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Notes

- 1 An earlier German-language version of this article appeared in: Kai-Uwe Hellmann/Guido Zurstiege (2008) (eds): *Räume des Konsums. Über den Funktionswandel von Räumlichkeit im Zeitalter des Konsumismus*, Wiesbaden, 159-177.
- 2 I am limiting myself to places that, in Böhme's sense (2001: 53), can be "sensed", places whose atmosphere and spatiality appear to us directly and which we, as observers, can experience by means of "affective concern" [*affektive Betroffenheit*]. Current discussions on virtual worlds and media spaces are thus bracketed out to the greatest extent possible. For an introduction to theories of social and media spaces, see the articles in Dünne/Günzel (2006) as well as in Lindemann (2002).
- 3 On the stage-managing [*Inszenierung*] of third places, see Gau (2004).
- 4 This definition has been worked out in diverse studies in media culture and communication (for example, cf. Jacke 2004) and appears to be productive in relation to the commercial, mass-communicative transformation of signs (for a general discussion of the idea of 'popular culture', cf. Storey 2003b).
- 5 On delegating pleasure and consumption and the inter-passivity accompanying it to a different, more critical point of view, see the studies of Pfaller 2002 and Jacke 2009a. In this connection, Weh (2004: 32) maintains: "The paradoxical logic consists in the fact that it more economical for the individual to delegate feelings onto the setting of a 'Third Place' than to

- commit oneself emotionally.” What remains is to make clear to what extent this delegating can be assessed as active and passive.
- 6 This shift in perspective from the production to the reception side as an investigative field for research on consumption was introduced (among others) by Dichter; see Cohen/Rutsky 2005; Cubitt 2005; Trentmann 2006. In the meantime, even standard works in economics talk about the second reality of the consumer; see Kroeber-Riel/Weinberg 2003: 570ff.
 - 7 On the potentials of guerillas or protesters against communication and media, as seen from a theoretical perspective on media culture, see Liebl et al. (2005) as well as Kleiner (2005).
 - 8 On the association between music and soccer as realms of popular culture, see also Theweleit (2004) and Gebauer (2006).
 - 9 These observations are based on personal experiences and conversations with promoters, artists, referees, marketing associates, fan representatives and sponsors in seminars on club and soccer culture. The aforementioned art project “Third Places“ dealt with the very similar phenomena of video games, music videos and soccer stadiums; for an introduction and theorization, see Rothauer 2004, Gau 2004, Weh 2004.
 - 10 In cultural terms, there is a range of third places where socialization makes use of popular music; in general, see Negus 1996: 164-189, Fairchild 2008: 17-34. For an example of a street (King’s Road in London) as the place of popular music, see Décharné 2006; on virtual sites, see Kibby 2006 and Nakamura 2002.
 - 11 It should be discussed to what extent the visitors of clubs and soccer stadiums contribute to the atmospheres of those places as unpaid workers and how this is calculated on the production side. On these considerations with respect to the Disneyland amusement park, another thoroughly commercialized third place, see Legnaro 2000.
 - 12 For an informative outline on the development of popular music in the framework of industrialization and urbanization, see Wicke (2001); for a concrete account of music and space, see *ibid.*, 22ff.
 - 13 For more on “being there“ [*Dabeisein*] in culture and its various levels, see Jacke (2004).
 - 14 Even if individualization becomes extreme and the “Pimp Generation features itself like hell“ – to paraphrase a special topic of the German-language music and cultural journal *De:Bug* from November 2006 – people will still be marketing themselves on *MySpace* while nonetheless still hoping to put together a circle of friends, go out and experience a musical presence. For a criticism of this increasing self-mediatization, see Jacke 2009a. On visualizing music in clips and the possibilities of analyzing them, see Jacke 2009b.
 - 15 The fact that these “struggles“ always involve the appropriation of local and acoustic space in a thoroughly political sense is shown in the club events of queer groups; see the contributions in Haase et al. (2005). On club culture generally, see the contributions in Redhead (1997) and in the *Kunstforum International Vol. 135: Cool Club Cultures*.
 - 16 Proceeding from art and literature, Gumbrecht (1998: 207) discusses the dialectic between originary provocation and canonized convention in the case of sports. This thread of his discussion is particularly prevalent in discourses surrounding popular culture; see Jacke 2004.
 - 17 A *kutte* is a denim or leather vest, onto which the insignia of one’s favorite football team and allied clubs and fan clubs has been sewn, and which (out of superstition) is worn by fans to the games. It marks and delimits them as fans, and distinguishes and demarcates them from men wearing suits, for instance.
 - 18 Yet in Weh’s research, even the consumer does not exist prototypically as a set quantity but instead appears to be changeable: “Today the so-called “Gruen Transfer” signifies that instant in which a single-minded consumer looking for a certain item becomes a spontaneous consumer. It is the transformation registered in a sudden change in the person’s way of moving: Purposeful walking gives way to a motion that is meandering“ (Weh 2004: 36). The same applies to customers, less so to classic fans. In addition, to this day there have hardly been any studies on female football fans, who have now been observed more carefully and are regarded as a target group in Germany particularly since the 2006 World Cup.
 - 19 See, for example, the studies in Jacke/Keiner 2006, 2007.

- 20 On Austrian stadiums and soccer fans, see Horak's studies (1997, 2002, 2004).
- 21 On the overwriting of a place with a history using the example of the newly formed Times Square of London, see Gau (2004).
- 22 In the shift from the fan in the kutte to the posh fan, we can make a noteworthy observation about soccer that Storey has made for the realm of opera (2003b). Events that used to be popular culture are increasingly being appropriated by social strata that are financially better heeled; these events are directed (or re-directed) at them and are thus in the course of time rendered elite, canonized into "high culture" events. Will the soccer stadium, then, perhaps become the opera hall of tomorrow?

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Being-in-the-City: A Phenomenological Approach to Technological Experience

By Jason Wasiak

Abstract

This paper examines dynamics surrounding the negotiation and articulation of the body-technology relationship necessarily characterizing the experience of being-in-the-city. Nowhere is everyday experience more mediated by technology than in the city. Being-in-the-city involves being embodied by technology at levels ranging from micro to macro. Despite the fact that technologies are constantly evolving in city space, relations with technology tend to become quickly normalized — mundane — transparent. Given this normalization as well as the sheer pervasiveness of technology in constituting city space it is important to examine the ways in which technology comes to shape the experiential contexts of everyday life. In urban space, technologies result in new sights to be seen, sounds to be heard, smells to be smelt, textures to be felt, as well as altogether new modes of experiencing the everyday. In exploring the dynamics surrounding the ongoing, multi-layered negotiation and articulation of the body-technology relationship necessarily characterizing the experience of being-in-the-city a phenomenological perspective is adopted. Heidegger's writing on technology, Merleau-Ponty's writing on embodiment and perception, and Don Ihde's writing on the body and technology contribute to a theoretical framework for a phenomenological examination of the experiential implications of being-in-the-city, a technological ecology.

Keywords: being-in-the-city, technology, embodiment, perception, phenomenology, technological ecology

Introduction

Nowhere is everyday experience more mediated by technology than in the city. The city is an inherently technological environment, largely constituted through technology, and serving as a focal point for the ever-widening production, distribution, and consumption of technology. Thus, it might be said that what is fundamental to both the “city as sign” and “signs of the city” is technology. Technology is and always has been central to the city as reality, as image, and as symbol. In the broadest sense the city itself might be thought of as a technology that one is embodied by through inhabitation. By merely occupying a location within city space one is inherently enmeshed in a vast array of technological relations. In this sense, being-in-the-city necessarily involves a perpetual, multi-layered negotiation with technology at levels ranging from micro to macro. The most immediate site of this negotiation is in the relationship between the body and technology as one navigates everyday life in the city. The way in which this body-technology relationship is negotiated and articulated involves a constant reshaping of perceptual regimes, which holds profound implications for all other aspects of experience. Perceptual horizons are constantly being reworked in variety of ways through the everyday bodily engagement with technology, and this is particularly heightened in the technologically constituted environment of the city. The negotiation and articulation of the technology-body relationship in the everyday navigation of the city holds profound implications for the experience of space and time as well as all aspects of sensation. An overwhelming amount of what enters the senses within city space is a by-product of technology. In the city technology results in new sights to be seen, sounds to be heard, smells to be smelt, flavors to be tasted, textures to be felt, as well as altogether new modes of experiencing the everyday.

Despite the fact that technology is constantly evolving in city space, at the micro level our technological relations tend to become quickly normalized through everyday engagement—rendered mundane—receding into the background of day-to-day experience. This tends to conceal their import. As such, this paper examines dynamics surrounding the ongoing, multi-layered, negotiation between body and technology necessarily characterizing the experience of being-in-the-city. While it is acknowledged that interactions with technology in city space are vast and heterogeneous in nature—culturally variable and shaped by one’s social location—what is focused on here is the primacy of the negotiation and articulation of the body-technology relationship necessarily characterizing the navigation of everyday life in the city. To this end, a phenomenological perspective is adopted. In particular, Heidegger’s writing pertaining to technology, Merleau-Ponty’s writing pertaining to embodiment and perception, and Don Ihde’s writing pertaining technology and the body contribute to a theoretical fra-

mework for a phenomenological examination of the experiential implications of being-in-the-city, an inherently technological environment.

Conceptualizing Technology

As technology is being upheld as an essential feature of the city, and as it is being suggested that the negotiation and articulation of the body-technology relationship is primary to the experience of being-in-the-city, it is necessary to unpack the term technology before proceeding further. As a word, *technology* tends to be used in everyday discourse with such ubiquity that its particular meaning often remains quite vague. Its roots are those of the Greek *technē*, often referring to art or craft knowledge (as distinguished from *epistēmē*, or theoretical knowledge), and *logos*, referring to discourse. Thus, in this sense technology refers to discourse or knowledge of art or craft production. However, Heidegger (1977) notes that for the Greeks *technē* belongs to *poiēsis*—a bringing-forth out of concealment. As such, *technē* refers not to art or craft knowledge but rather means “...to make something appear, within what is present, as this or that, in this way or that way” (Heidegger 2001: 157). In its most everyday usage, technology tends to refer to those non-naturally occurring things resulting from the discourse or knowledge of art or craft production—that is, those built things that have been made to appear in particular ways and which serve as means to ends.

Kline (2003), in observing both the ubiquity and vagueness surrounding the usage of the word technology, points out that it has come to refer simultaneously to “...things, actions, processes, methods, and systems” (210). He draws attention to four predominant usages of the word technology. The first, and perhaps most common usage (as mentioned above), is in reference to *non-natural hardware or artifacts* manufactured by humans. The second usage is in reference to *sociotechnical systems of manufacture*, including all elements that go into the creation of any given artifact (labour, machinery, physical, economic, political, legal environments). The third usage observed is in reference to *knowledge, methodology, technique, or “know-how”*. And the fourth usage that Kline (2003) points to is its reference to *sociotechnical systems of use*, which include combinations of artifacts and people (among other elements) that allow humans to perform tasks that they would otherwise be unable to, thus extending their capacities. Kline (2003) suggests it is of particular importance to understand technology in terms of *sociotechnical systems of manufacture* and *sociotechnical systems of use*, for it is within these overarching systems that particular *techniques* and *artifacts* are embedded.

Very often technology is thought of as simply a means to ends (instrumental definition); however, the true accuracy of this characterization as a linear relationship has been contended. As Jonas (2003) notes, with *modern* technology this means-ends relationship is less linear than it is circular. He observes that as a

process, modern technology tends not toward equilibrium, but rather ceaselessly generates new directions for subsequent innovations, and that innovation tends to spread rapidly facilitated by technology and insured by competition. These processes are particularly accelerated by the proliferation of communication technologies and felt most intensely in city space. Jonas (2003) suggests that as a result of these features “progress” is an inherent drive of technology, not merely an ideological concept, inasmuch as it builds on that which came before. Stiegler (1998) echoes this writing: “Technical progress consists in successive displacements of its limits” (33). He goes on to write: “Innovation accomplishes a transformation of the technical system while drawing the consequences for the other systems” (Stiegler 1998: 36). With both Jonas (2003) and Stiegler (1998) attention is drawn to fundamental ways in which technology opens up new possibilities for further innovations with new sets of limits and consequences (some which are intended and/or foreseen while many are not).

Heidegger (1977) interrogated the fundamental accuracy of the instrumental definition of technology as merely a means to an end in *The Question Concerning Technology*. He observed that while the instrumental definition of technology is at some level correct it does not yield the most accurate insight into the essence of modern technology. The essence of modern technology, for Heidegger, is itself nothing technological, but rather it is a process of “challenging-forth” the “standing-reserve” (*Bestand*) of nature. This is perhaps put most simply in Heidegger’s (1966) *Memorial Address* where he writes: “Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry” (50). For Heidegger (1977) the essence of modern technology cannot be reduced to mechanics and individual human activity. It is rather the all-pervasive process of “challenging-forth” into “ordering” as a particular mode of “revealing”. It is a preoccupation with “unlocking”, “transforming”, “storing”, “switching about ever anew” and “distributing” that which is concealed in nature and might be put to use. Heidegger (1977) uses the word *Enframing* (*Ge-stell*) to describe the type of ordering that sets about this “challenging forth”. Stiegler (1998), echoing Heidegger, characterizes the move to modern technology, writing: “Technics commands (*kbernaô*, the *etymon* of cybernetics) nature. Before, nature commanded technics. Nature is consigned by technics in this sense: nature has become the assistant, the auxiliary; in similar fashion, it is exploited by technics, which has become the master” (Stiegler 1998: 24). Implied here is the double meaning of “ordering”: “to command” as well as “to arrange”. We can conceptualize the city as a space that is most exemplary of these processes of “challenging forth” into “ordering”, where processes of “unlocking”, “transforming”, “storing”, and “switching about ever anew” manifest themselves in the densely layered technological networks through which one navigates everyday life.

Heidegger’s (1962) earlier discussion in *Being and Time* of “The Being of the Entities Encountered in the Environment” also yields numerous relevant points of

consideration in foregrounding the present discussion. Here, Heidegger discusses dynamics surrounding our relationship to *equipment* [Zeug], as we encounter it in our everyday experience. He notes that in our everyday dealings we encounter equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement, etc.; and that at the most fundamental level equipment is “*something in-order-to*”. In this “*in-order-to*” structure resides an *assignment* or *reference* of something to something else within a referential whole. The oft-quoted example he gives is the use of a hammer for hammering. In discussing this example Heidegger points out the extent to which “putting-to-use” “*in-order-to*”, constitutes the type of being that equipment possesses as a “*readiness-to-hand*” [Zuhandenheit]. And furthermore, that the more one grabs hold of the hammer and puts it to use, “the more primordial does our relationship to it become” (Heidegger 1962: 98). Dreyfus (1990), in his commentary of *Being and Time*, further notes that: “When we are using equipment, it has a tendency to “disappear”. We are not aware of it as having any characteristics at all” (64). In what Dreyfus calls *absorbed coping*, the awareness of equipment recedes into transparency as one becomes absorbed in the task at hand with the skillful implementation and smooth functioning of that equipment.

Heidegger (1962) goes on to point out that when equipment breaks-down or is somehow found to be unusable (“*un-ready-to-hand*”), that it is at this precise moment that the equipment in relation to the referential whole is made conspicuous. We are made aware of our relationship to the equipment and its relationship to the referential whole, an awareness that had receded into the background in the skillful implementation and smooth running of the equipment. As he writes: “When equipment cannot be used, this implies that the constitutive assignment of the “*in-order-to*” to a “*towards-this*” has been disturbed... *when an assignment has been disturbed*—when something is unusable for some purpose—then the assignment becomes explicit” (Heidegger 1962: 105). Dreyfus (1990), in further characterizing this writes: “Temporary breakdown, where something blocks ongoing activity, necessitates a shift into a mode in which what was previously transparent becomes explicitly manifest. Deprived of access to what we normally count on, we act *deliberately*, paying attention to what we are doing” (72).

In light of the above, a number of premises might be established for the present discussion: a) being-in-the-city is characterized by a ongoing negotiation with an ever-expanding relational totality of equipment, which one necessarily engages with as a part of everyday coping (or merely occupying a location within an urban space for that matter). This ever-expanding relational totality is a result of dynamics observed by Jonas (2003) and Stiegler (1998) as an essential feature of technology; b) one’s necessary engagement or negotiation with technology in city space is something that becomes increasingly normalized, transparent, and primordial through everyday use, familiarity, or habit; and c) inasmuch as one is

necessarily surrounded by technology at every turn in the city, the breakdown or otherwise *un-readiness-to-hand* of equipment (at levels ranging from micro to macro) is also an everyday aspect of navigating the urban landscape, where otherwise normalized/transparent/primordial relations render themselves conspicuous in their *un-readiness-to-hand*.

Don Ihde's (1990) *phenomenology of technics*, which builds on insights from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, provides further points of relevance in prefacing a discussion of the dynamics characterizing the navigation of the city. Here Ihde defines *technics* as: "...the symbiosis of artifact and user within a human action" (Ihde 1990: 73). In his *phenomenology of technics*, Ihde puts forth several existential relations that we have with technology, including: *embodiment relations*, *hermeneutic relations*, *alterity relations*, and *background relations*. *Embodiment relations* describe the way in which technology comes to be taken into the body and factored into one's experiencing of the world. An example he gives is the relationship one has to eyeglasses: the "I-glasses-world" relationship, through the normalization of experiencing the world through the eyeglasses, comes to be rewritten as "(I-glasses)-world". As Ihde (1990) writes, with *embodiment relations*, "...I take the technologies *into* my experiencing in a particular way by way of perceiving *through* such technologies and through the reflexive transformation of my perceptual and body sense" (Ihde 1990: 72). Inasmuch as this experiencing through technologies becomes increasingly normalized the technology becomes increasingly "transparent". Furthermore, the better fit the technology is in relation to the body and the task at hand the more likely it is to recede into the background of awareness. Ihde's notion of *hermeneutic relations* is where technologies are understood as something to be read and interpreted. As he writes: "Readable technologies call for the extension of my hermeneutic and "linguistic" capacities *through* the instruments, while the reading itself retains its bodily perceptual location as a relation *with* or *towards* the technology" (Ihde 1990: 88). He later writes: "Through hermeneutic relations we can, as it were, *read* ourselves into any possible situation without being there" (Ihde 1990: 92). With *alterity relations* technology becomes the other or quasi-other *to* which one relates. In addition to these three variations Ihde (1990) also discusses *background relations*, noting that when technologies operate in the background the "withdrawal" of its overt presence manifests itself as a sort of present "absence", where the technology operates as if it were "to the side". It is, however, still part of one's experiential field albeit, by definition in the background.

Ihde's *phenomenology of technics* and the genealogical line of thought from which it was derived (namely Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty) provide a very rich point of entry in thinking about the experience of being-in-the-city, which at any given moment is characterized by a complex, multi-layered texture of these relations, and which in their familiarity often come to be normalized and rendered transparent. What could be extended in Ihde's account is the nuanced

way in which these relations are constantly being negotiated and are in constant flux. The navigation of the technologically constituted environment of the city necessarily involves dense layers of these relations at any given moment, and we often slip between them from one moment to the next. These relations may be more or less complex and densely layered at any given moment, and may appear to vary as such depending on the way in which they are viewed. Very often awareness of these relations recedes into the background of everyday experience in their normalization.

One last point of contextualization with respect to conceptualizing technology: As Nardi and O'Day (1999) point out the very language we use to describe our relationship to technology tends to colour our perception of it. At the most general level they note (as many others have) that to a large part discourse surrounding technology tends to take place along a utopian versus dystopian spectrum. Furthermore, they point out the extent to which the metaphors that are commonly used to describe our relationship to technology come to shape our perception of that relationship in a variety of ways—at times illuminating it and at times obscuring it. Among the more common metaphors observed are: *technology as tool*, *technology as text*, *technology as system*, and *technology as ecology* (all of which were operating implicitly in various places above). They suggest that describing *technology as a tool* involves viewing it as a means to an end (the instrumental definition) and tends to imply one's control or mastery over it. *Technology as a text* involves viewing technology as carrier of meaning—something to be read and interpreted in order to understand its imperatives in different social settings. *Technology as a system* tends to involve the perception of the inextricable and relentless quality of technological change, and the sense of being caught up inside of it. And the metaphor that they are in most favour of is that of *technology as ecology*. As they note this metaphor tends to promote the view of being "...surrounded by a dense network of relationships in local environments". (Nardi & O'Day 1999: 27). The metaphor of *technology as ecology*, thus, tends to afford a greater degree of agency among all actors in the environment and is somehow fitting with the notion of technics as the symbiotic relationship between body and technology. The notion of *technology as ecology* also seems particularly appropriate in thinking about being-in-the-city—for what is a city if not a *technological ecology*? Implied in this term is both the organic and mechanic—the movement of bodies with, within, and in relation to technology at a variety of levels within the multi-layered technological environment that is the city.

Building and Dwelling: The City as Technological Ecology

Insomuch as ecology deals with the relationships and interactions of organisms with each other and their environment, it seems appropriate to think of the city as a technological ecology. The environment of the city is comprised

overwhelmingly of technology, and thus being-in-the-city necessarily involves being enmeshed in a complex, multi-layered, symbiotic relationship with technology that is constantly negotiated and in constant flux. As Lash (2002) notes: “I operate as a man-machine interface—that is, as a technological form of natural life—because I must necessarily navigate through technological forms of social life” (15). As the environment of the city is overwhelmingly a technological one, practically every bodily movement involves layers of relations with technology that are more or less to the foreground of one’s awareness at any given moment. Kittler (1996) speaks to the multi-layered-ness of the city in terms of networks, writing: “In a city, networks overlap upon other networks. Every traffic light, every subway transfer, and every office, as well as all the bars and bordellos, speak for this fact” (719). The city is comprised vast layers of networks—economic networks, social networks, political networks, transportation networks, information networks, plumbing networks, electrical networks, etc. All of these networks are, in some way, part of what Kline (2003) observed as *sociotechnical systems of manufacture* and *sociotechnical systems of use*. Manufacture and use correspond roughly to what might be among the most primary activities governing city space: namely, building and dwelling.

The city as a technological ecology is fundamentally characterized by building and dwelling. Heidegger (2001), in his essay *Building Dwelling Thinking*, examines the relationship between these activities, asking: “What is it to dwell?” and “How does building belong to dwelling?” (143). He observes that dwelling is something attained through building, and that building has dwelling as its goal. In this sense he provisionally notes that building and dwelling are related as means to ends. However, in a similar wariness exemplified in *The Question Concerning Technology*, where the instrumental definition of technology as simply a means to an end was interrogated as to its essential accuracy, here too the means-end schema is seen to obscure the essential relations of building and dwelling. For as Heidegger (2001) notes: “to build is in itself already to dwell” (Heidegger 2001: 144). He suggests that while not all buildings are dwellings, that they belong to the domain of dwelling. While things such as bridges, hangars, stadiums, power stations, railway stations, highways, dams, market halls, etc. are not dwellings (in the narrower sense), that: “These buildings house man” (Heidegger 2001: 144). Nowhere are building and dwelling more concentrated than in the city, and the way in which building and dwelling are articulated in city space necessarily shapes one’s experience of the city.

As an organic body dwelling in the technological ecology that is the city, one is necessarily engaged in an ongoing, multi-layered negotiation with technologies from the very moment waking. As Ihde (1990) writes: “It is likely that we are called into waking consciousness by a technology, be it the ringing of an alarm, the beeping of a quartz clock, or the sounds of a clock-radio” (1). Ihde goes on to note the vast array of mundane technological objects that we are likely to engage

with in the first hour of waking alone: beds, blankets, bathrooms, plumbing systems, kitchen appliances, moving outward to transportation systems, automobiles, etc., all of which are the genesis of particular technological trajectories, embedded in *socio-technical systems of manufacture* and *socio-technical systems of use*, and all of which in our interaction with them involve a negotiation. Implied in the term negotiation, is the way in which interactions with technology are inherently two-way relations. Ihde (2002) points to this, writing: "...all human-technology relations are two-way relations. Insofar as I use or employ a technology, I am used by and employed by that technology as well" (137–138).

As city space is comprised overwhelming of technology, this negotiation is particularly unavoidable. Moving around in the city necessarily involves navigation amidst the technologies that comprise the landscape, such as: buildings, sidewalks, streets, bridges, traffic lights, streets signs, street lamps, telephone poles, electrical and telephone wiring, advertisements, TV screens, etc. It is also a negotiation with those technologies that one grabs hold of and implements in everyday dealings such as keys, doors, tools, pens, books, computers, bags, mobile phones, maps, etc. There are also those technologies that are taken into one's bodily experience of the environment, such as shoes, clothing, eyeglasses, and various other prosthetics. And there are those technologies operating in the background at all times, such as: electrical grids, information networks, plumbing systems, thermostats, etc.

My own present mundane experience exemplifies one particular articulation of this multi-layered technological negotiation. Right now I am sitting in a room, in a building, in the city.¹ In this sense, I am literally inside of technology at a variety of different levels. Practically every aspect of my perceptual field is currently engaged with technology and my bodily posture and movements are shaped by the negotiation with things such as my clothing and the chair that I am sitting on in relation to the table that I am sitting at and the computer that I am typing on. I am currently listening to music with headphones; however, the volume is quite low and thus it is rather unobtrusive. This aspect of the soundscape seems to meld with the low white noise of the ventilation system, whose cool air currents make themselves known to my bare arms. At a certain point the coolness of the air circulating within the microclimate of the building prompts me to put on a sweater. I am sitting directly in front a large window and the view consists almost entirely of concrete, steel, glass. The vast majority of the frame is dominated by building structures. In the upper right portion of the window frame there is one building that has been embodied by an exoskeleton of scaffolding, and to the far right a large mechanical crane pivots in and out of the window frame, exemplifying the city's fundamental preoccupation with building.

I am necessarily engaged in a multi-layered negotiation with technology. The most immediate site of my negotiation amidst these dense networks of technological relationships is the body, and the way in which the body-technology

relationship is negotiated involves a constant reshaping of perceptual regimes, which is simultaneously both mundane and profound. Merleau-Ponty (1962) implicitly articulates both mundane and profound aspects of this relationship, writing: “Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments” (166). It is through our everyday engagement with technologies that our relationship to these things comes to be normalized, rendered mundane, habitual, familiar, and transparent; however, the way in which this relationship is negotiated involves a reshaping and dilation of our particular way of being-in-the-world.

Moving Around In The City

Being-in-the-city involves movement. The dilation of our being-in-the-world through the appropriation of instruments can be exemplified by examining the negotiation between technology and the body in the various modes of moving around in the city. This negotiation takes place at various levels of awareness, with varying degrees of foregroundedness or backgroundedness and may be more or less complex and multi-layered at any given moment. The variety of ways in which bodies move throughout the city exemplify technological variations that are simultaneously mundane and profound. The way in which the technology-body relationship is negotiated and articulated in one’s everyday going about the city holds significant perceptual and thus epistemological implications. Kingwell (2008) acknowledges the link between epistemology and lived urban spaces writing: “...epistemology and philosophy of mind are further linked to the real grids and spaces that we conscious entities occupy, the streets and places of actual cities. Epistemology is architecture, and architecture epistemology, because both concern our experience of the world *as space*” (24). Kingwell (2008) attends to the way in which the bodily experience of urban space comes to shape consciousness, while acknowledging the mutually constituted nature of this relationship. As he writes: “Consciousness shapes cities. They are built places, the results of human imagination and planning... Cities also shape consciousness then, becoming the places of our dwelling and occupation and love affairs. They house our thoughts and guide our flow” (Kingwell 2008: 136).

In thinking about the various ways in which the technology-body relationship is negotiated in moving about city space we can juxtapose several common modes of travel that are mediated differently and to greater or lesser degree by technology. Among them: walking, cycling, driving, and riding the subway. In doing so perceptual, experiential, and epistemological implications (all of which intersect with one another) are revealed. The particularities of any city space in terms of layout, geography, and infrastructure lend themselves more or less to particular modes of moving around, and this is certainly a major consideration and point of contestation for urban planning. At a more primary level, however, an account of

technological variations of moving about the city yields insight into perceptual implications surrounding the negotiation of the body-technology relationship.

When one is walking in the city movement is, to a large part, shaped by the negotiation of things like sidewalks, streets, traffic lights, cars, buildings, other people, the city's layout, geography, etc. It is also a negotiation that takes place with such mundane (but nonetheless technologically sophisticated) things as shoes and clothing and the appropriateness that they hold in relation to my body for the task of walking, as well as the relative distance between things, and the ease or difficulty of geographic features in relation to the suitability of one's body to get around this way. Walking in its slowness holds different perceptual possibilities for the experience of the urban landscape. The potential ability to attend to micro-level details of the environment in the slow scrolling cityscape is vastly expanded when walking as opposed to faster moving modes of transportation. Things may be noticed that would otherwise be perceived only as a blur or not at all with different modes of travel. Details from street level detritus to insects or birds on the sidewalk to the endless stream of signs and advertisements seeking one's attention are all available in a way that may be obscured by different modes of movement. Attention is freed to a greater or lesser degree based on immediate obstacles such as density of other walkers, car traffic, cyclists, etc. One's body is vulnerable to the natural elements (wind, rain, snow, hot or cold temperatures, etc.), mediated only by clothing. It is also more vulnerable to other hazards such as traffic. Walking as a mode of perception has different temporal and spatial limits than other more technologically mediated forms that extend the bodily potential in terms of distance and speed. Walking in the city, while certainly a less technologically mediated or extended as an articulation of the body-technology relationship, still very much involves a complex and multi-layered negotiation with technology at a range of levels.

Moving around the city by bicycle steps up the level of integration between body and technology, mechanically extending the natural capacity for movement of the body. As McLuhan (1967) famously observed: "The wheel is an extension of the foot" (31-32). One's body is no longer in direct mediation with the street but now by shoes on pedals attached to a crank, moving gears that turn wheels encased by inflated rubber tires—the new point of mediation with the street. Bodily capacities here are greatly extended as speed and distance are relativized accordingly. There is a speed and flexibility afforded to riding a bicycle that in many instances prove advantageous to either foot or car travel in crowded city spaces. There is still a certain unmediated intimacy with the environment but the technological extension of speed results in a very different perceptual experience. Visual details that are perceptible while walking pass by in a blur on a bicycle; and one is necessarily drawn to attend to different things while cycling than walking. There is a bodily vulnerability that is possibly increased from walking in that one is often dealing more intimately with car traffic. There is still an

immediate contact with the environment that is further mediated with other forms of travel, though the experience of that environment is quite different than when walking. The coupled increase in speed and intimacy with the environment changes the way one experiences the air—the air is tangible as a thickness directly correlated to speed.

When fully absorbed in the act of cycling there is a truly remarkable symbiosis between body and technology. In the skillful navigation of city streets by way of bicycle one's awareness of the relationship to the technology tends to recede into the background when all things are functioning fluidly. This relationship may be rendered conspicuous in the instance of some form of equipment failure (which may range from subtle to drastic). However, when things are functioning smoothly there is a remarkable unity between bicycle and body—the bicycle becomes an extension of the body. What is further remarkable about the body-technology negotiation in the instance of cycling is the extent to which it exemplifies a very deep type of bodily memory that is much more about movement than conscious retention. The popular simile "It's just like riding a bike" pays testament to the fact that one seems to retain a kind of deep-rooted bodily memory of how to ride a bicycle even after the passage of extended periods of time. Merleau-Ponty (1962) alluded to a similar kind of bodily memory in his discussion of habit, with the example typing. As he writes: "It is possible to know how to type without being able to say where the letters which make the words are to be found on the banks of keys" (166). In both cycling and typing (as with many other body-technology relationships) there is a type of bodily memory at work that is very different from that of active conscious recall.

The symbiosis of body-technology is differently exemplified in driving a car. This variation of technologically mediated movement yields further insight into the perceptual implications in the negotiation of this relationship. In a car, as opposed to walking or cycling, one's body is literally inside the technology, and thus there is further technological mediation one's experience of the environment. There exists a microclimate within the car that can be manipulated in ever more sophisticated ways. In this sense there is an inside and an outside lacking in the previous variations. Driving a car involves several of Ihde's (1990) relations with technology layered simultaneously. Being-in-a-car is an *embodiment relation* inasmuch as one is embodied by the car, experiencing the space *through* the car. There are at once a number of *background relations* (the thermostat, the smooth running of the engine, suspension, etc.); *hermeneutic relations* are exemplified explicitly in the numerous gauges on the dashboard that are there to be read; and my relation to other cars on the road is certainly one of *alterity*. Furthermore, it can be said that these relations are anything but static—they are complex, multi-layered, and in constant motion. Depending on how the body-technology relationship is being negotiated one may slip between these relations from one moment to the next. For instance, there is a move from *embodiment relation* to

alterity relation in stepping out of the car. Furthermore, in the instance of breakdown, the transparency of *embodiment* and *background relations* in the flow of skillful coping and smooth running of the technology immediately become *alterity* and *hermeneutic* as the point of failure requires diagnosis.

When driving in the city there are an astonishing number of considerations—one must attend to a great number of variables and the margin for error is very little. However, the more one drives in the city the more these complex layers of variables recede into the background as a result of an absorbed skilful coping. One is able to navigate remarkably tight parking spaces and dense traffic that tend to characterize city driving. Again this speaks to a certain unity achieved in the technology-body relationship, where the body here has taken on the exoskeleton of the vehicle extending it dramatically in terms of bodily capacities and temporal-spatial relations. Merleau-Ponty (1962) alludes to the ability to navigate space intuitively with bodily extensions in his discussion of habit, specifically citing the example of driving. As he writes: “If I am in the habit of driving a car, I enter a narrow opening and see that I can ‘get through’ without comparing the width of the opening with that of the wings, just as I go through a doorway without checking the width of the doorway against that of my body [107]” (165). Here, Merleau-Ponty (1962) notes that one’s experience of space is not that of objects with specific measurements (volume and size), rather one experiences these things as “potentialities of volume” in relation to “the demand for a certain amount of free space” (165). Again, we see a certain symbiotic unity achieved between technology and body. This too relates to Ihde’s (1990) notion of technological transparency achieved in *embodiment relations*, which itself was much related to Heidegger’s discussion of familiarity and the skilful coping with equipment in the environment.

Another variation of technological movement about the city, which further exemplifies the perceptual implications of the negotiation of body and technology, is that of riding the subway. Being-in-the-subway one is once again embodied by technology, although unlike driving a car one relinquishes control over the vehicle’s movement. As a result there are fewer immediate demands on one’s attention than when cycling, driving, or walking. As a result of these different attentional demands, and the fact that one is travelling below ground, moving about the city this way has whole different set of perceptual implications. When riding the subway one enters at a particular point in the system, negotiating turnstiles, token slots, card-swiping machines, crowds of people (which ebb and flow depending on the particular time of day). One descends beneath the ground where one is denied perceptual access to the above ground geography; thus, this mode of travel is characterized by large blind spots in above ground geography.

In thinking beyond the specific negotiation and perceptual implications of these particular modes of moving about the city, the related concepts of familiarity (Heidegger) and habit (Merleau-Ponty) further illuminate the way this body-

technology negotiation takes place in time. Aside from the particular mode of travel, it is certainly a very different experience to navigate an urban space for the first time as opposed to those routes that one takes on a regular basis. Navigating unfamiliar city space is usually *hermeneutic relations* (maps, directions, signs, etc.) contributing to one's spatial orientation, while navigating the familiar spaces of the everyday tends to happen almost unconsciously. Inasmuch as the city itself may be viewed from the macro level as a technology that one is embodied by and in constant negotiation with, what Heidegger observes with his hammer example (that the more one grabs hold of it and puts it to use the more primordial does this relationship become) might also be extended to the way that we experience everyday movement within the city in terms of familiar or unfamiliar spaces. The more we put the city to use as a technology in our everyday dealings with it, the more primordial does this relationship become; and the more the equipment that are involved in the everyday navigation of the city recede into the background. In navigating unfamiliar urban space, the city as a technology is experienced as an "un-readiness-to-hand". Relationships that recede into transparency as a result of their familiarity (through the everyday usage of specific routes and modes of transportation) are rendered conspicuous in the un-readiness-to-hand of unfamiliar spaces.

Experiencing Architectural Space

In the city everyday movement is the movement within and between architectural structures necessarily involving the negotiation of thresholds. As Kingwell (2008) writes: "The threshold is an ontological anomaly, a space outside of space, existing only in its vanishing... The function thus of the threshold, therefore, is not to *be wide* but to *separate*, and thus to *be crossed*" (158). Architecture, at a fundamental level, is about the construction of boundaries that delineate and thus create space. Structures themselves have thresholds that are more or less permeable to different things (i.e. bodies, light, sound, air, etc.). They determine what constitutes the private vs. the public and often due to the permeability of boundaries this distinction is blurred or intruded upon.

Kingwell (2008) acknowledges the extent to which the concept of the *threshold* is one that governs not only the creation of architectural structures and thus meaningful space, but also the fundamental way in which it is a feature of consciousness itself. He writes: "The logic of inside and out belongs to us all—not only because we all must live with and in buildings, those monuments to human desire, but also because, and more profoundly still, it structures consciousness itself" (Kingwell 2008: 93). Thus, we can think of the perpetual crossing of thresholds not only in terms of something that characterizes one's bodily movement in space, but also in the way that this is closely related to the experiential dimensions of communication, perception, and consciousness.

Kingwell (2008) sees the act of crossing thresholds, something that we are doing all the time in moving about the city, as being closely related to Heidegger's notion of *Zuhandenheit* (readiness-to-hand). As he writes: "Indeed, the mundane act of unself-conscious crossing is a good example of what Heidegger means by *Zuhandenheit*, the readiness-to-hand of potentially revealing acts or spaces, whose revelatory possibilities are held in check by their very everydayness" (Kingwell 2008: 158). The myriad of structural thresholds that mark out and create space at every turn in the city is certainly exemplary of the vast and complex technological infrastructure that is the physicality of the city in terms of its architectural space. It is also very much true that at the most fundamental level in our everyday going about the city the conspicuousness of these architectural boundaries tend to recede into the background of awareness—particularly in those spaces most familiar. Again, Heidegger's notion of the ready-to-hand [*Zuhandenheit*] speaks to the experience of crossing thresholds in architectural space. Just as it was noted that the more the hammer is put to use the more primordial and transparent is one's relation to it become, so too might this be said about the navigation of thresholds in urban space. Heidegger's observation of the conspicuous of breakdown or otherwise un-readiness-to-hand also shows itself here. Familiarity and habit tend to result in the transparency of thresholds in the everyday navigation of city space. These thresholds render themselves conspicuous in breakdown or otherwise un-readiness-to-hand (ie. broken lock, misplaced keys, etc.).

There is also the permeability of boundaries in city space. The proliferation of communications and communication technologies in city space tends to result in the increasing permeability of boundaries that delineate private from public—communication spills. This is something that has become increasingly apparent with the proliferation of mobile phones. Conversations that prior to this technology would have been more contained within the private space of the home or office spill into public space. And in terms of the home, sounds from the street or noisy neighbours, unwanted telemarketers, etc., permeate the boundaries of private space illuminating the differing types of thresholds. Again here, the way in which the technology-body relationship is negotiated reshapes the types of things to enter into one's perceptual field and the modes through which one perceives them.

The Mediated City

The movement of information throughout the urban environment is constantly reshaped by technology holding profound implications in terms of one's experience of space and time. As McQuire (2008) observes: "The intermeshing of digital technology with urban terrain has produced a new set of pressures with both centripetal and centrifugal trajectories" (McQuire 2008: 20). One's movement and experience of the city is increasingly characterized by an engagement with a wide

variety media—both those that are part of the cityscape as well as those that accompany the body in the everyday going about the city. Kittler (1996) goes so far as to note the extent to which the city as a whole can be seen as a medium. As he writes: “MEDIA record, transmit and process information—this is the most elementary definition of media. Media can include old-fashioned things like books, familiar things like the city and newer inventions like the computer” (Kittler 1996: 722). At the micro level, being-in-the-city involves the ongoing negotiation with and navigation through increasingly mediated spaces. The ever-increasing plethora of communication devices that people tend to engage with comes to characterize, texture, and give shape to everyday experience in the contemporary city. The way in which one interacts with media in the city necessarily involves a reshaping of perception (both in terms of those things to be perceived as well as opening up entirely different modes of perception), which profoundly impacts the experience of space and time; however, this experience tends to be quickly normalized, again rendered transparent, through regular engagement.

The increasing proliferation of communication technologies, most heightened in urban space, is a manifestation of what Jonas (2003) observed as the circular means-end relationship of modern technology and its capacity to generate ceaseless new direction for innovation. Also, communication technologies themselves are unique in that they allow for the capacity to accelerate the spread of innovation, further accelerating these processes. A result of the ever-increasing proliferation of communication technologies has been a qualitative shift in the nature of information. Borgmann (2003) observes this drawing the distinction between *information about reality*, *information for reality*, and *information as reality*, noting: “Traditionally, information has been about and for reality. But through the technological developments of the past century and a half, information, though still about and for reality, also has begun to rival reality, itself; and has emerged virtually *as reality*” (Borgmann 2003: 573). *Information as reality* it would seem has resulted from the genesis of both *information for* and *information about reality* and has become perpetually expansive. The experiential implications of this hold significant considerations in the navigation of urban space.

The contemporary city is, as McQuire (2008) notes, a *media-architecture complex* that profoundly reshapes perceptions of time and space. McQuire (2008) testifies further to this writing: “Dwelling in a space-time framed by a proliferation of media technologies fundamentally alters human sensory and perceptual parameters, sustaining a range of encounters which questions the limits of the body and the authority of embodied perception” (McQuire 2008: 10). Here McQuire (2008) attends to the primacy of the body and the perceptual implications involved in the negotiation of the body-technology relationship within increasingly mediated city space. McQuire’s (2008) broad argument is that the pervasiveness of media in urban space coupled with tendencies of convergence, mobility and instantaneity “become a constitutive frame for a distinctive mode of

social experience” (vii). As he writes: “...the spatial experience of modern social life emerges through a complex process of co-constitution between architectural structures and urban territories, social practices and media feedback”. (McQuire 2008: vii). For McQuire, the proliferation of media in the urban environment results in the creation of “hybrid spatial ensembles”. The ways in which the body-technology relationship is negotiated in relation to ever-expanding forms of media comprising the cityscape holds profound perceptual implications for how we orient ourselves in space and time. As McLuhan (1967) was apt to point out: “Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one of these senses alters the way we think and act—the way we perceive the world.” (26-41).

Conclusion

The city is an everyday environment constituted through technology and characterized by the continual proliferation of technology. As such, the city, more than any other space, might be thought of as a technological ecology, where one’s relationship to the environment (and increasingly to others) involves a myriad of technological relations. In the city one is necessarily enmeshed in a complex and densely layered set of technological relations that are in constant flux as one moves about the city and as a result of perpetual technological changes in the urban environment. These relations may be more or less complex and densely layered and more or less foregrounded in one’s awareness at any given moment. The most central argument that has been put forth in this paper is that fundamental to the experience of being-in-the-city is an ongoing, multi-layered, negotiation with technologies at levels ranging from micro to macro. The most primary site of this negotiation is the body-technology relationship, which is constantly being renegotiated as one moves throughout urban space amidst and with a variety of technologies. The way in which the body-technology relationship is negotiated and articulated holds profound perceptual implications both in terms of those things that enter one’s perceptual field as well as the very mode through which they are perceived. The everyday engagement with technology in the urban environment tends to result in a normalization and transparency of body-technology relations, receding into the background of awareness, rendering themselves explicit, manifest, or conspicuous in the instance of breakdown or failure. Inasmuch as being-in-the-city necessarily involves the navigation of complex and dense layers of technological relations at every turn it has been suggested that what is fundamental to both the “city as sign” and “signs of the city” is technology—that technology is and always has been fundamental to the nature of the city as reality, as image, and as symbol.

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Notes

- 1 The room that I am sitting in is on the 4th floor of the Toronto Reference Library, and the table that I am sitting at is in front of a large window overlooking the cityscape facing Yonge Street, which currently holds the title of the “longest street in the world”.

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“Quit stalling...!”: Destiny and Destination on L.A.’s Inner City Roads

By Martin Zeilinger

Abstract

If driving has today really become a Western “metaphor for being” (Hutchinson), then common roadside signs proclaiming “Right lane must exit” or “Through traffic merge left”, inventions such as the automatic transmission, and the agreeable straightness of freeways can all be understood as symptoms of an ongoing socio-political struggle between the driver as democratic agent, and the state as institutionalized regulatory force. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the context of urban traffic, where private motorized transportation represents both the supreme (if illusory) expression of personal freedom, and official efforts to channel individualism by obliterating its sense of direction and ideological divergence. On the concrete proving grounds of the clogged inner-city freeway, “nomad science” and “state science” (Deleuze & Guattari) thus oscillate between the pseudo-liberatory expressivity of mainstream car culture and the self-effacing dromoscopic “amnesia of driving” (Baudrillard). Are a city’s multitudes of cars resistant “projectiles” (Virilio) or, rather, hegemonic “sites of containment” (Jane Jacobs)? This essay approaches the complex tensions between “untamable” democratic mobility and state-regulated transit by way of two Hollywood-produced films that focus on traffic in Los Angeles: in *Collateral* (2004), a cab driver comes to recognize and transcend the hopelessly directionless circularity dictated by his job; in *Falling Down* (1993), a frustrated civil service employee abandons his car on a rush-hour freeway and decides to walk home, forced to traverse the supposedly unwalkable city without the “masking screen of the windshield” (Virilio). As they “quit stalling”, both protagonists become dangerous variants of the defiant nomad – one a driver who remains on the road but goes “under the radar”, the other a transient pedestrian whose movement becomes viral and unpredictable. My analysis of the films’ metropolitan setting and of the incessant movement that marks both narratives links political and philosophical economies of motion, speed, and transit to a discussion of the various *bandes vagabondage* (Deleuze & Guattari) that are formed between city and driver, driver and car, and car and pedestrian. In this discussion, the inner-city road emerges as a primary site of conflict between civic rule and individual subject, and the flow of urban traffic comes to represent the tensions generated in spaces where movement is understood as both liberating and as a form of control.

Keywords: Traffic, Urbanism, Los Angeles, *Falling Down*, *Collateral*

“Quit stalling...!”: Destiny and destination on L.A.’s inner city roads

The time has come, it seems, to face the facts:
revolution is movement, but movement is not a
revolution.

(Virilio 2006: 43)

In her 1961 study of the socio-political structure and overall livability of American urban centers, Jane Jacobs famously detailed how the material circumstances of our living environments influence social relationships and inform our “sense of connection to the world” (Jacobs 1961: 19). In this essay, I expand Jacob’s dictum with the assumption that cars, too, are part of the circle of material circumstances that constitute our homes, and that car-centered politics and economies of transportation, therefore, strongly influence our sense of belonging and situatedness. By pairing two relatively recent mainstream feature films with prominent commentary on ideological regimes of mobility (by Deleuze, Virilio, and Baudrillard), I will discuss how driving serves a double function of manipulating our interaction with the world around us, and simultaneously of veiling this restrictive mediating function. Given the specifically cinematic context of two narratives that primarily deal with experiences of urban mobility, a further subtext of this essay will be the implication that an ideological critique of the ways in which the windshield frames our perception of the world might be productively extended to cinematic experiences in general.

Similar to the collective experience of life in the urban neighborhoods discussed by Jacobs, the use of cars and our dependence on them shape a strong sense of our lifeworlds and of our ways of interfacing with them. All kinds of movement – and especially motorized transit – may consequently be understood as multi-faceted metaphors for “being” in general. Based on this understanding of the car and its inhabitants as more or less autonomous vectors, the sociologist Sikkivu Hutchinson, for example, has argued that “the automobile has not only destroyed meaningful experience with and attachment to “place” in the city, but has played a big role in effacing its history” (Hutchinson 2003: 110). Despite the fact that they help us traverse space, cars can thus effectively blind drivers to the material and social realities they move through – a function that has a clear political dimension insofar as it is maintained through a state-regulated system of roadways, traffic regulations, and public transportation services.

This essay is based on the assumption, then, that an urban population’s interfacing with the realities of its lifeworlds is impacted not only by the parameter of “location”, but that it is, furthermore, strongly inflected by the processual circumstances of how connections between such locations are realized and experienced. As the most prominent state-controlled modality of private transportation, driving is, in other words, an ideal site for investigating how the material and po-

litical realities of contemporary urban life are generated, manipulated and obscured. In what follows, I thus scrutinize the tense and precarious relationship between driving and civic agency in two Hollywood films that focus on the complex struggle between driver and road, and that centrally hinge on the suggestion that the sense of "freedom" that driving is said to give us may be a mere simulation – a by-product of a highly efficient system of control. In Michael Mann's *Collateral* (2004), a L.A. cab driver (Jamie Foxx) comes to recognize and ultimately transcend the hopelessly directionless circularity dictated by his job; in Joel Schumacher's *Falling Down* (1993), a frustrated civil service employee (Michael Douglas) abandons his car on a grid-locked L.A. freeway, and decides to traverse the supposedly unwalkable city on foot, thereby pushing through what Paul Virilio calls the masking screen of the windshield (Virilio 1998: 11-22). Both films are set in Los Angeles, and acknowledge the city as a site that stereotypically represents both the utopian vision of democratic motorized liberty and its dystopic opposite of a smog-polluted, four-wheeled abyss that enslaves its inhabitants in the name of mobility, rather than freeing them. Both *Collateral* and *Falling Down* thus invoke L.A.'s omnipresent web of freeways, on- and off-ramps and filthy roadsides as major antagonists vis-à-vis the lead actors, and posit driving and traffic as the primary sites of the ideological and socio-political conflicts played out in the narratives.

As I will show, both films portray road and car, as well as more abstract notions of the ordered flow of traffic, gasoline and capital as zones of never-ending conflicts between the vague cipher of the state (or law) and its mobile subjects. On the road, varied constellations of a hegemonic power structure are constantly being generated, openly put in question, and surreptitiously reconfirmed – and both *Falling Down* and *Collateral* are in this sense representative of the fluid ideological constellations that continuously play out in the unceasing, yet always-impeded flow of traffic. Drivers are thus perpetually faced with the following problematic: at what point does a drive to the movies, to the pier, or to the mall cease to represent a volitional, deliberate activity, and become, rather, an act of "being-driven" towards these somewhat disingenuous symbols of democratic liberty? If driving has truly become a metaphor for being, then common roadside signs proclaiming "Right lane must exit" or "Through traffic merge left", inventions such as the automatic transmission, and the agreeable straightness of freeways can all be understood as symptomatic of ongoing realignments of the power dynamics between the driver as democratic agent and the state as an institutionalized regulatory force. How, then, are the ordered and controlled structures of mobility that comprise our experience of driving constituted and deployed? How are they utilized by State apparatuses, and subversively appropriated by resistant democratic subjects? Is driving ever "a way out", or are more radical measures required – perhaps what the A.L.A.R.M.A. group of activists and media artists has called the performance of the unimaginable: walking in L.A. (Gonzalez, Ramon & Chavoya

1998: 82)? How, finally, might such a metaphor be extended to the experience of cinema more generally? Are the Hollywood films discussed herein flattened representations – like the roadside attraction seen through a windshield – that invite or that obstruct “walking in L.A.”?

In “Dromoscopy, or The Ecstasy of Enormities”, Paul Virilio reflects on the spectacle that unfolds before the eyes of the driver of any automobile, and describes it as a “dromoscopic simulation” – as the projection of a plethora of moving images into the interior of the car, a simulation that creates, for the driver and passengers (who remain stationary in relation to the vehicle), the sensation of being moved.¹ On the screens of windshield, rearview mirror and dashboard, the observers of this great picture show of driving – the “voyager-voyeur[s]” (Virilio 1998: 13) – behold the virtual movement and animation of the inanimate objects they are passing by. “So long as the dromoscopic simulation continues”, Virilio writes, “the comfort of the passenger is assured” (1998: 13). Yet this comfort, founded on the illusion of autonomous movement, actually “depends upon being immobile while moving”, a state imposed on driver and passengers by the regulated system of transportation (1998: 14).

This state of comfort, of course, is that of utter immobility at the heart of a moving machine, a fact that driver and passengers may remain unaware of. Virilio’s argument thus points to the already-mentioned tension between standstill and motion (or progress) on which both *Falling Down* and *Collateral* focus: it implies that behind every drive we go on, there is present a concealed ideological force that creates and perpetually recreates the spectacle of individual freedom that is embodied in the seemingly unlimited mobility of the passengers. *Collateral*’s protagonist Max, therefore, initially embraces his job as cabdriver as one that gives him access to the ultimately illusory freedom of always being on the road. The protagonist of *Falling Down*, on the other hand, is deprived of the safe, manipulative haven of his car’s interior right from the beginning, and as a result is forced immediately to perceive his surroundings differently. As will be seen, Virilio’s arguments throughout “Dromoscopy” thus approximate the premise of both films discussed in this paper – namely the drivers’ paradoxical “mobile inertia”, i.e., their passivity vis-à-vis the dromoscopic simulation that focuses their attention on a distant goal, blinds them to their surroundings, and strengthens their belief in the inevitability of the modalities of driving. The fact that this simulation largely goes unnoticed suggests that its state-controlled staging contains a mechanism which enables it to veil itself from the driver’s view (who will be distracted by traffic lights, construction sites, and the flow of traffic in general), while the conditions of the driver’s exposure to the spectacle are perpetually reproduced and maintained. Again, this argument tentatively links the “projection” of a car’s exterior onto the windshield to the viewing of film: as Virilio expands our concept of driving by describing it as the stationary perception of “moving” images, so the event of movie-watching can be compared to the activity of driving. The cinema-

machine, it could be argued, imposes – or tries to impose – a set of parameters on the completeness of the audience’s experience that is not unlike the range of conceptual and practical limits that govern motorized transit. The implied suggestion that cinema, whether as ideological or technical apparatus, veils as much as it illuminates is, of course, by no means new; but in the context of *Falling Down* and *Collateral*, it brings up the interesting question of how mainstream “driving films” in general may engage (or ignore) this issue.

Most of *Collateral* is a literalization of the above-mentioned comfortable state of unrecognized immobility, and it is only towards the end of the movie that the cabdriver Max abandons his vehicle and is thus able to break through the surface of the fraudulent sense of freedom that driving had previously provided him with. In *Falling Down*, on the other hand, the dromoscopic screen of the windshield is removed at the very outset, and the rest of the film is a violent meditation on its function as a veil covering up the actual on- and off-road realities outside the car. But what are the specific political functions of such an elaborate “spectacle”? Most literally, it would seem, they rest in the fact that movement, as an exertion of physical force, holds the promise of violence, resistance and chaos. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note in *A Thousand Plateaus*, it is therefore “a vital concern of every State ... to control migration and ... to establish a zone of rights over an entire “exterior”, over all the flows traversing the ecumenon” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 385) “There is”, in other words, “a need for fixed paths in well-defined directions, which restrict speed, regulate circulation, relativize movement, and measure in detail the relative movements of subjects and objects” (1987: 386).

Beyond the institution of traffic rules, this containment of mobility is also achieved by Virilio’s dromoscopic simulation, which he primarily describes in appropriated aesthetic terms, reminiscent today of the act of interfacing with a virtual reality. Based on Virilio’s notion that “[t]he driver’s seat of machines offers a political image of the future” (Virilio 1998: 20), the car becomes – in line with Deleuze and Guattari’s argument – a prosthetic, naturalized (and thus invisible) extension of contemporary human beings’ sense of their surroundings. In equating the windshield, rearview mirror, etc. with screens, Virilio consequently posits the car as a “machine of surveillance” (1998: 20), rather than as a machine that subjects its users to state surveillance. This implied complicity of driver and passengers again points to the fact that their continuous subjection to the spectacle of driving serves to obscure its own double function of creating, on the one hand, a sense of liberty and mobility, and, on the other hand, of blinding them to the anti-dynamic and circular nature of the “spectacle” in which they continuously participate.

Driving the LA freeway system, then, may well be a way of performing individual, “untamable” democratic mobility, and thus of asserting one’s sense of freedom; but simultaneously, the same act of driving always feeds the ideological

machine that continues to direct, control, and (literally and figuratively) immobilize all drivers. Both *Falling Down* and *Collateral* are shot through with implied references to stereotypically American notions of “Manifest Destiny” and a “Westward Ho” mentality that have helped to purport and consolidate a very particular set of myths of the limitless opportunities a motorized, mobile America holds in store. But like most road movies that most prominently engage such myths, neither *Falling Down* nor *Collateral* formulates a conclusive strategy for successfully breaking down the windshield-screen, and for the most part, both films’ protagonists struggles (reflecting, again, those commonly picked up in the popular road movie genre) acknowledge the bounds of the greater regime of autonomous mobility, rather than conquering them.

Yet since both films are set exclusively against the geographical setting of Los Angeles’ network of roads and freeways – not exactly known to represent “progress” – the films nevertheless manage to strongly (if inconclusively) challenge the idea that driving embodies freedom. The road emerges as the most immediate point of contact and conflict between the state and its subjects. Forced to engage this conflict, *Collateral’s* protagonist Max thus slowly comes to terms with the deceptive myth of motorized mobility’s freedom, which he himself perpetuated by driving his taxi through the nocturnal city for twelve years. Once he realizes the extent to which he had fallen prey to the illusory spectacle of the freedom of mobility, the narrative allows him to finally transcend what Jean Baudrillard, in *America*, has called the state-induced “amnesia of driving” (Baudrillard 1988: 9). He does so by actively resisting the stasis of his immediate environment, wrecking his car, and, notably, by getting on the subway. *Falling Down*, as noted, sets out at a different stage in the power struggle between lawful road and defiant driver: here, a former employee of the Ministry of Defense abandons his car on a congested freeway and embarks on a westward journey home on foot. Having penetrated the ideological façade of allegedly liberatory motorization, the protagonist then performs a series of violent outbursts – fierce acts of resistance directed against the dominant ideologies that restrict and regulate his movement – that call to mind the phrase “road rage”, but that cannot fit the category simply because he is no longer driving.

The ideological conflicts that both films locate in the tension between driving and being-driven also figure importantly in Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of nomadology. If, as they state, it is indeed a “vital concern of every State [to] restrict speed, regulate circulation [and] relativize movement”, then the road is, undoubtedly, an ideal site for the deployment of a complex set of organizing and controlling mechanisms. As an important point of contact between a state’s laws and surveillance apparatus and its subjects (citizens who feel free because they can drive wherever they choose), the street-grid thus functions to uphold law and order, since uncontrolled movement would constitute the threat of potential resistance. Ideally, Deleuze and Guattari point out, a state must subordinate its subjects

in ways that make movement manifest itself as a naturalized law. In an interesting analogy to the realm of physics, they thus argue that “it cannot be said that a body that is dropped has a speed, however fast it falls: rather it has an infinitely decreasing slowness in accordance with the law of falling bodies” (1987: 371). Cars, in this sense, do not speed along a freeway of the driver’s own volition. They are, rather, hurled along by the authorities and by the rules that regulate direction and pace of all motorized movement. Virilio, accordingly, describes cars as “projectiles” (Virilio 1998: 17), a term that again stresses the passivity of all vehicles in relation to the laws that govern their movement.

In *Collateral*, the protagonist for the most part willingly assumes this position of subordination. *Falling Down*, however, posits an interesting alternative that works well within the argumentative framework proposed by Deleuze and Guattari as well as by Virilio: once the film’s protagonist has abandoned his car, he becomes an uncontrollable threat to the state’s rule of law as embodied by the rules of the road. By arming himself, he becomes, in fact, the “driving force” of the movement around him. No longer is he contained in a projectile-car bound by the naturalized laws of the state; rather, he is now the commander of his own arsenal of projectiles (at one point even a portable rocket launcher), and thus poses a nomadic threat to the order he has more and more disturbed ever since his seemingly straightforward act of deserting his vehicle. This transmutation is also reflected in the naming of the protagonist: not knowing who they are dealing with, the police identify the man by his car’s license plate, which, appropriately, spells “D-Fens”. Throughout much of the film there is, consequently, a sense that he is a vigilante actively defending his personal rights in lieu of the freedom of all drivers. In an added twist, it finally emerges that he is a former employee of the Ministry of Defense, so that the desertion of “D-Fens” begins to look even more like a politically motivated form of resistance. By abandoning his car, and by repudiating the dominant deterritorializing strategy of the never-ending, circular drive (something that *Collateral*’s Max only achieves towards the end of his journey), D-Fens is able to tentatively resist internalization by the state order, and to evade its sphere of control while spatially remaining within it. After abandoning his car in the clogged arteries of L.A.’s freeway system, he acquires the elusive distinction of a viral organism on an infectious rampage – infectious but at the same time contaminated with the poison of the system he seeks to undermine; a nomad who can for a limited time freely roam the otherwise clearly regulated strata of Los Angeles.

Whatever the motivation, D-Fens’s unruly and uncontrollable movement, which becomes possible only once he leaves his car behind, strongly works against the state’s scheme of what the political scientist James Scott calls “the making legible” of space (see Scott 1998: xiv, 445 p.). Yet while Scott discusses the project of “legibilization” (again a control measure designed to channel the position and movement of the public into a manageable order) in primarily static terms (such

as "forest hygienization" and strategies of restricting the rezoning of urban regions), the concept is relevant also in terms of a more dynamic mobility, as evidenced by Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the long history of state-ordained repression of *bandes vagabondages* (1987: 368), or by Virilio's extensive discussion of the politics of mobile warfare (see Virilio 2006: Chapter 2). All ideological ordering schemes of making urban space legible for the state, then, may be seen to simultaneously serve the function of rendering the socio-political realities of the street-grid illegible for its inhabitants. Arguably, naturalizing particular modes of transportation such as motorized private transit, which can easily be bound by constrictive systems of rules and regulations, is very useful for upholding the integrity of Virilio's dromoscopic spectacle, which works to remove the possibility of friction between subjects. And indeed, as Hutchinson points out in *Imagining Transit*, the propagation of private mobility has in many contexts eliminated the necessity for contact between urban dwellers, and has erased social awareness in large parts of urban and suburban populations (Hutchinson 2003: 111). The metal veil of the chassis, Virilio's windshield-screen, and the appendant impact that driving has on the human faculties of vision and peripheral perception thus all prevent passengers from encountering, seeing, feeling, smelling, or touching the urban "Other", and may indeed shroud all problems related to it.

The spectacle of driving keeps intact, then, an unwittingly selective and yet whole vision of that which lies outside the vehicle, and conveniently enables the mobile population to live, consume, and converse on the figurative "diamond lane" (on North American roads often the only, reserved lane affording the privilege of speedier transit), rather than facing exposure to the material and ideological reality of urban environments. Yet the system may be liable to falter and fail when drivers break through the dromoscopic simulation's "fourth wall". In the first half of *Collateral*, the critical difference between the car's interior and exterior is strictly upheld and foregrounded. Early in the film, Max agrees to take on a single passenger, Vincent, for the entire night. Max's compliant and even gratefully submissive position vis-à-vis the law and order of driving quickly becomes obvious when compared to his passengers' radically different type of mobility: Vincent constantly exits and re-enters the car, and is able to conceptualize it as a quasi-nomadic tool useful in countering the rules of the road (and the rule of law in general). For Max, on the other hand, the cab is a vehicle of complicity. This is strongly conveyed, for example, on the level of sound: as soon as Max starts his engine, calm and soothing pop music usually starts playing in the background, giving him a feeling of freedom and peaceful, content unity with the streets. Whenever his car stops, on the other hand, the unwelcome and threatening noise of the exterior immediately shatters this harmony of the seemingly peaceful and open city that otherwise unfolds upon the screen of his windshield. Driving, then, subjects all passengers of a vehicle to what Baudrillard discusses as a hyperreality that is manifest, again, in dromoscopic simulations. Like Virilio, Baudrillard, too,

observes that the drivers “have no sense of [this] simulation” (Baudrillard 1988: 28); caught in a self-perpetuating system of the observation of channeled movement, “they are themselves simulation in its most developed state, but have no language in which to describe it, since they themselves are the model”, and therefore constitute part of the model’s continuous reproduction apparatus (1988: 28).

The way in which the music playing on Max’s car stereo blends into the extradiegetic soundtrack strongly evokes this concealed nature of the control system of transit; it emphasizes the functions of the windshield as veiling device, and together with the observed speed of driving, it induces – in Baudrillard’s argument – a paradoxical immobility of the mind that can easily be exploited by dominant ideological forces who have the power to influence general experiences of driving. With the soothing music and the tentative goal of his passenger’s destination before him, Max is thus relaxed and content, and filled with the joy of the felt meaningfulness of driving. Fittingly, it is also at these times that he likes to dismiss his current job as temporary, as something that he is only doing until the realization of his dream project – a limousine company. This make-believe company, appropriately called “Island Limo”, is envisioned as the perfect fulfillment of Max’s impossible dream of attaining freedom by driving through a street-grid of state-controlled mobility: “You won’t want to get out of the limousine”, he says, “because the ride is so comfortable”. In the imaginary pursuit of this dream, the real Sisyphean character of Max’s profession – as a cabdriver, he is constantly under way but never arrives at a final destination – is lost on him, and instead he feels encouraged to recede still further into the hyperreal simulacrum of a perfect dromoscopic simulation.

Falling Down, on the other hand, abandons the myth of the liberated motorist from the very beginning. The film opens with the breakdown of the barrier that conceals the system of automated movement, shown in what amounts to a powerfully executed reversal of the soothing interior soundscape of Max’s cab. In *Falling Down*, the hero’s car is never seen to move – it is always already stuck in a traffic jam near a construction site. Quickly, the overwhelming heat and dust, a malfunctioning A/C-system, and a plethora of minor but obtrusive exterior images and noises that crowd the immobilized driver’s audiovisual field amalgamate into a hellish song that raises the protagonist’s awareness of what Virilio calls the state’s “vehicular prohibition”, i.e. its prohibition of mobility (Virilio 2006: 51). Had the deceptive spectacle of driving been left intact, D-Fens would not have noticed any of this. Once he is exposed to the hostile environment of the obstructed street, however, he realizes, with a pang, that immobility indeed equals death, and is prompted to do what Max does not achieve until the climax of *Collateral*: he quits stalling and sets out on foot.

Streets, roads and freeways bear the institutional mark, then, of the government agencies that build and maintain them. But sometimes, the private, itinerant mark of the individuals navigating them may also inscribe itself on them – most likely,

perhaps, at the accidental sites of traffic jams, blown tires, missed turns, or ticketed parking. And while large parts of the mobile population are effectively assimilated by the self-perpetuating and self-veiling apparatus of private transportation, occasionally resistant drivers (or pedestrians) may indeed be established as Deleuzian "nomads", representing a threat to the state power because they continue to traverse state territory while remaining on an ideologically exterior plane of deterritorialization. As noted, *Falling Down* and *Collateral* each revolve around the conflicted relationship between nomad and state, and portray the resistance against sedentarization in different stages of development. In both narratives, the male hero's story is embedded in typical mainstream narrative conventions (in *Falling Down*, loss of social and professional status interfere with everyday life; in *Collateral*, a happenstance buddy narrative provides the background for an emerging "rags-to-riches" story). Yet by way of these conventions, both films posit the breakdown of the flow of traffic as a proto-nomadic moment of crisis.

This reading again brings into play the related question of how "driving films", with their common focus on the uncertain link between mobility and autonomy/independence, engage their own complicity in a visual regime that dictates and channels perception as much as the dromoscopic spectacle does. In the cases of *Collateral* and *Falling Down*, it must be noted that the films do not challenge this problematic implication. In fact, the narrative logic of both films hinges on the integrity of the system of rules that controls mobility as well as our perception thereof. In *Collateral*, this regime is implicitly acknowledged, but not explicitly defined, and is needed as the backdrop for the protagonist's moral awakening; similarly, in *Falling Down*, the law of the road serves as an abstraction of the protagonist's adversaries, so overpowering that his travails take on a noticeably quixotic character. Ultimately, both films' protagonists become aware, to some degree, of the dromoscopic spectacle's artificiality. However, neither of the two manages to overcome the power that hides behind the screen; Max simply shifts his position, and comes to term with the realities of quasi-autonomous mobility by ultimately choosing the subway over the car, while D-Fens, eventually, accepts the powers he provoked by breaking through the windshield-screen as insurmountable, and admits defeat. Both films thus work with the dromoscopic spectacle as a useful image that becomes, it seems to be assumed, an universally understood reference point for the wrongs done to their protagonists. This does not mean, however, that awareness of the powerful visual regime that rules over drivers and passengers is pushed to extend to the Hollywood cinema-machine itself.

Like the resistant drivers of *Collateral* and *Falling Down*, Deleuze and Guattari's nomads are ideologically positioned at the threshold of the state and pose a threat to the established order because they have access to a "minor science" – a nomad science of resistant mobility that must continually be "barred, inhibited, or banned by the demands and conditions of State science" (1987: 362). State power's aim must be to immobilize, to "limit, control [and] localize nomad

science” (1987: 363), so that it cannot become an alternative model to the state-regulated mobility that keeps in check the flows of individual movement while upholding a vision of democratic freedom. The ideological double function of controlled movement as a mode that simultaneously liberates and controls a subject is thus realized when the “State does not give power, [but] makes [its subject] a strictly dependent organ with an autonomy that is only imagined yet is sufficient to divest those whose job it becomes simply to reproduce or implement of [sic] all of their power” (1987: 363). Because “the State never ceases to decompose, re-compose, and transform movement, or to regulate speed”, in regulating traffic it therefore manages to reverse and delay the formation and realization of (urban) nomad resistance (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 386).

How well this scheme works becomes obvious in Max’s resistance to giving up the mind-numbing lure of a sanitized, aestheticized driving experience. As it turns out, his passenger Vincent is a contract killer, and while Max loses himself in the picture show of the limousine he will likely never be able to afford, Vincent commits his first murder of the night – and blows apart Max’s dream when the dead body, hurled out a window, smashes the roof of the cab. This is the decisive moment that marks, quite literally, the first showing of cracks on the screen on which Max’s dromoscopic simulation plays out; from now on, Max will be forced more and more to take on nomadic qualities, to act on his own volition; more and more, he will have to violate the system of rules and regulations by which he usually lets himself be guided through the well-maintained network of streets, signs and traffic lights. When the passenger Vincent continues on his mission to drive through the city and kill a total of six stationary victims, he also continues to repeatedly expose Max’s dream as unrealistic and illusory, and, like *Falling Down*’s D-Fens, the cabdriver is severely shocked by the narrative literalizations of Virilio’s dictum that to drive is to remain immobile, and that this immobility equals death.

Almost exactly halfway through the film, Max is finally forced to take a more active role of resistance vis-à-vis both Vincent and the spectacle of driving. Now, he is pushed hard to take initiative, to transcend (speed)limits and to veer off the orderly straightness of the road – and when Vincent provokingly yells at the cabdriver to “QUIT STALLING!”, Max finally embraces the potential of nomadic mobility. Forced upon the realization that his low-paying and dependent job is nothing but a perpetual deferral of his actual plans, Max recognizes that during the twelve years of his “temporary” job, he was driven rather than driving of his free will; that for him, motion equaled immobility rather than progress, speed equaled deceleration, and even the straightest roads eventually led him back to his starting point. From this moment onward, Max’s driving assumes a more subversive quality, and when he finally rebels against the order of the street, he does so by purposefully crashing his car. While earlier, his mobility had no direction, his speed is now no longer decomposed by the state’s regulatory schemes, and he can,

for once, really be on his way. As the movie's showdown commences, Max chooses Los Angeles' public transit system over the street – a choice that represents an individual act of defiance which will allow him, within the film's diegetic logic, to evade the controlling reach of the never-ending circulatory flow of steel, capital and time on the inner-city road.

In *Speed and Politics*, Paul Virilio, too, outlines the potential of speed and movement to empower public forces against a dominant ideology that in turn seeks to contain it, and states that “[t]he masses are not a population, a society, but a multitude of passersby” (Virilio 2006: 29). Virilio thus defines the road as a primary site of political conflict, historically used to forestall unruly and uncontrollable mobility. When the state succeeds with these schemes of mobility-management, the opposition of “stasis to circulation” (2006: 31) gains significance not merely in relation to the practical usefulness of organizing the flow of motorized vehicles, but, again, also in relation to the containment of all political, resistant movement. Speed limits (which, ultimately, fail to contain Max's rebellion) are exemplary for these schemes, and represent a practical state intervention designed to limit “the extraordinary power of assault that motorization of the masses creates” (2006: 51). Ideally, however, the control of traffic and of the general economic role of motorization turns the democratic “freedom to move” into an “obligation to mobility”, a forced and controlled mobility (2006: 53). The road then ceases to be what Deleuze and Guattari identify as the traditionally proletarian site of traveling laborers and craftsmen, and instead turns “every social category, without distinction, into unknown soldiers of the order of speeds – speeds whose hierarchy is controlled more and more each day by the State” (2006: 136f.). For Virilio, the authorities' control over the modes and modalities of individual movement is hard to reverse – “the more speed increases”, he concludes, “the faster freedom decreases. The [vehicle's] self-propulsion finally entails the self-sufficiency of automation” (2006: 158).

A somewhat less negative picture of the relationship between controlled space and motorized movement is painted by Baudrillard, who, while acknowledging the positive all-importance of American popular myths of speed, nevertheless describes the experience of driving in ways that are reminiscent both of Deleuze and Guattari's gravity analogy and of Virilio's projectile analogy. Baudrillard's view provides, perhaps, the best approximation of the conceptual overlap between the spectacle of driving and the allure of mainstream cinema, when he states: “movement which moves through space of its own volition changes into an absorption by space itself – end of resistance...” (1988: 10). What distinguishes this account of the politics of driving (and of the effects of partaking in the spectacle of driving) from Virilio's theory is that here, the sense of freedom felt when driving is, by all accounts, taken to be “real” (if deceptive) – and perhaps it is this potentiality of real freedom that accounts for the temporary success that *Falling Down*'s D-Fens has with his quasi-nomadic resistance.

Ultimately, however, D-Fens must fail. Throughout his trek on foot, it becomes obvious that he cannot overcome the pull of popular American myths of westward movement, pastoral settlement, and individual freedom, which are just as much part of the dominant ideology as is the discourse of motorized mobility that he aims to abandon. While Max the cabdriver eventually realizes that driving his taxi confines him to a never-ending circular motion with no way out, *Falling Down*'s tragic hero arrives at a literal dead end: when the film has him winding up on a pier out on the Western-most shore of the continent, the protagonist must irrefutably accept that Los Angeles really is the end of his world. Interestingly, prior to this tragic climax the defiant act of walking seems no less alien to police and city authorities than it is to D-Fens himself. Even though notions of "moving on/up" and of "just passing through" permeate the entire narrative (and, temporarily, become more plausible because D-Fens is able to walk where no one else can drive), the protagonist's nomadic mobility immediately forces him to acknowledge a new set of emerging obstructions: the dead ends of routes blocked by construction, of line-ups at gas stations and fast food restaurants; the downtown and gangland frontier of run-down housing projects, dying immigrant businesses, and looming drug- and poverty-related crime; and, last but not least, the suburban frontier of indifferent employees and alienated customers. D-Fens must navigate them all, and for a little while, it appears that without the mediating interface of his car, he now is able to see them in a new light – but in fact, it is due to the film's representation of walking as abnormal that its implied critique of the myth of seemingly liberating motorized mobility is never realized.

The freeway section from which D-Fens escapes cuts through a bad neighborhood, and thus the irritated and baffled pedestrian has his first violent encounters (one with a frustrated, uncooperative corner store-owner, and one with two gang members on the prowl). The disputes that immediately flare up concern territory and propriety: in a city in which life has adapted to the rule of motorized vehicles, in which most people try never to stop, and in which the relative safety of a car's interior has obliterated most residents' awareness of social, ethnic, and political issues, everything must remain in its right place and retain its proper pace. Transgression of boundaries will necessarily result, it seems, in violent conflict. Once D-Fens is deprived of the protective frame of his car, the narrative thus constructs him as being on the brink of realizing that only to walk is to see, whereas to drive is to remain blind to the outside world. Yet in Hollywood's extra-diegetic logic, the critical suggestion that acceptance of one's position as a mere viewer (whether as driver or as moviegoer) means giving in to an oppressive_ visual regime is perhaps too self-critically radical – and the truth of D-Fens's existence, in this sense, seems to fleetingly dawn on him when, in a poignant scene, the smoggy cityscape of L.A. is re-framed yet again, visually bound no longer by the chassis of his car, but by a hole in the sole of his shoe, held up to the eye in angry disbelief.

From now on, the protagonist experiments with what to him appears like a new kind of mobility; in a car, his navigational, evasive, even offensive options had been severely limited. “If everyone just cleared my path”, he declares repeatedly, “everything would be alright”. But once on foot, D-Fens finds that it is becoming easier to clear his path, and he begins to do so by force. Paralleling Virilio’s portrayal of the car as a useless bullet rather than a gun, D-Fens updates his armory, acquires a baseball bat, a knife, an arsenal of semi-automatic weapons, and finally a bazooka. Now that he is no longer bound to a projectile but rather commands a whole arsenal of them himself, this weaponry is supposed to assist him in the fight to get ahead. Accordingly, the protagonist’s opponents mistake him for a rebel with a political mission, and cannot see that D-Fens is merely a citizen on the defensive, an individual who insists on his right-of-way and who, quite tellingly, only attacks stationary objects that block his way. D-Fens’s rather irrational acts of resistance culminate in blowing up a section of freeway: after encountering yet another construction site, he recalls that the route had been perfectly passable the day before, and confronts a worker. The anti-hero’s distrust in the state-controlled system of organized movement finally erupts in all its force, and before firing his bazooka, he paranoically accuses the city authorities of deliberately interfering with the residents’ choice of where to go and of how to get there.

In the film’s safe narrative logic, this, of course, is madness, and D-Fens’s fatal trek ends, accordingly, in Venice Beach, one of Los Angeles’ western-most neighborhoods. Marking the impossibility of the popular American theme of perpetual westward-expansion, for D-Fens the pier quite literally represents the end of the world. But motorized mobility, it is intimated, is not bad per se, and for the film’s other characters, it is not advisable to follow the protagonist’s example and begin traveling on foot. In this sense, D-Fens’s ex-wife (the ultimate goal of his pursuit) puts herself at high risk when she walks out onto the pier and the open water, entering what in Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical model is understood to represent potentially empowered nomad resistance because water is a sphere exterior to the state’s ordering reach. Since the street-grid of control that is imposed onto the city does not reach out this far, the woman is in grave danger – and to the audience it must be clear that fleeing her troubled ex-husband in a car would have been safer, after all.

It is at this moment that *Falling Down*’s narrative most powerfully squares off the critical difference between Deleuze and Guattari’s “sedentary” and “nomadic” mobility, which is, by implication, also the difference between passive viewing and empowered, interactive observation. For a moment, it seems that D-Fens has finally reached a place that might allow him to transcend the oppressive structure represented by the urban freeway system. After the protagonist’s initial crossing over from Deleuze and Guattari’s “conceptual” state science of metrical, ordered movement to the “ambulant” nomad sciences that choose to cope with problems by way of “real-life operations” (1987: 374), the former civilian scientist of war-

fare has ceased to partake in the reproduction of the abstract organizing scheme of the road. D-Fens's pedestrian mobility has taken on the viral and rhizomatic qualities of nomad movement, and confronts the arborescence of sedentarized space, here embodied by the ex-wife's house with its lush garden, and by the danger of stasis that the viewer has begun to associate with it. Yet, true to the conventional narrative arc we have come to expect from films such as *Falling Down*, the film will entertain the possible success of this radical mobility no more than it would entertain the suggestion that its own structure of visualization supports (or challenges) such a mobility.

A similar notion is played out in *Collateral*, where the cabdriver's bedridden mother is bound to the hospital, grounded and artificially "rooted" by tubes going in and out of her body, and who thus becomes, at one point, an easy victim for the angered killer Vincent. But Max, too, has by now understood the passive projectile-nature of his cab; while the assassin passenger assumes that Max is still playing by the state's rules – which had earlier facilitated his immobility, and which had veiled his subjection to the routines of endless, circular driving – the cabdriver is now able to withstand the aggression of his nomadic passenger by responding to it from outside of his car. More successfully than D-Fens, Max has thus broken through the simulacrum of seemingly liberating mobility, and understands that cars are machines that may well render the outside world more beautiful and easier to cope with, but that also obstruct his view of the exterior, and create a sealed, fantastic world of deceptive orderliness and visible yet unattainable freedom in the interior. No longer, therefore, does Max act in favor of "automation", which equals "the absolute miniaturization of the political field" (Virilio 2006: 164); no longer does he unwittingly accept himself as merely a prosthetic extension of his cab, incapable of critical thinking or individual decisions. Until his nomadic rebellion, Max's only hope of breaking free was to "upgrade" his vehicle – a superficial change that would not have constituted a real change of his life's overall direction. It is only now, when he can conceptualize a real, radical change of his modes of transportation that he can fight the nomadic killer-passenger Vincent and, quasi by the way, change his own life. Interestingly, however, *Collateral* structures this supposedly life-altering change as the transfer from car to foot to subway – and thus posits, at the film's happy end, a mode of transportation that tends to be regarded (not only in Los Angeles) with much suspicion, and that is frequently understood as reserved for those who have, thus goes the popular perception, not managed to realize their dreams of independence and liberated mobility.

In my reading of *Collateral* and *Falling Down*, both films speak to an awareness within the sphere of popular culture of the existential conflicts that perpetually erupt on the road, which is treated as a prime site of interaction and conflict between state and subject. Both films thematize the paradoxical tensions generated in a place where mobility is posited as liberating, but where it is also heavily

regimented. Incessant movement and itinerancy thus constitute both a tool of control and a potential threat. In both films, the protagonists break through the “screens” of their windshields, abandon the reassuring guidance of their dashboards and automatic transmissions, and ultimately flee the drive-in theatre of the car, which generates Virilio’s dromoscopic simulation. Transcending their status of voluntary subordination, Max and D-Fens become urban nomads, and in the course of their journeys overcome the immobilizing localization that the state had heretofore subjected them to. Nomad resistance, here, does not emerge on the never-changing scenario of daily commutes, but in the singular and extraordinary event of the faltering of the state-governed spectacle of driving. In both films, as noted, this event is triggered by the malfunctioning of cars and the cessation of the orderly flow of traffic. As a “metaphor for being”, driving eventually fails to satisfy the two protagonists, and once they are no longer locked in the belief that driving is indeed liberating and an expression of individual freedom, they can shed the blinding mask of the chassis. While at the outset, both characters are subject to the blinding mechanism of orderly mobility and the organized “drive to no end” that prevents them from realizing their subordinate position in relation to the state, ultimately both narratives concern the process and consequences of penetrating the metal veil of the car.

Yet – both within the diegetic logic of each film, and in the broader context of comparing the spectacular visual regime imposed by the windshield-screen with the one represented by “driving films” more generally – *Collateral* and *Falling Down* do not stray too far from the path that ultimately upholds, rather than challenges, conventional opinion about that which can happen when non-participatory notions of viewing (and driving) are challenged. In *Collateral*, as noted, Max claims the freedom of a resistant urban nomad by crashing his car; in *Falling Down*, D-Fens’s self-liberating actions are less successful, and finally constitute an ungraceful fall from the only power that the former civil servant continues to recognize, that of American pastoral myths of independent, liberate mobility. While the fate of *Collateral*’s Max remains unclear, and is taking a not entirely unequivocal turn for the better when he mounts the often distrusted public transportation system, D-Fens’s claim of the nomad status ultimately results in absolute alienation, and stigmatizes him as a miscreant who in the end can only find certain death. His resistance is a mere “experimental surge” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 367) that fails to ultimately gain autonomy .

As distinct narratives and as examples of films that thematize driving in general, both *Collateral* and *Falling Down* largely follow the straight road prescribed by countless other films that take up this subject; they deviate from it only in so far as they more thoroughly develop (but never fully realize) the radical potentiality of nomad mobilities that negate the order of the road and the visual regimes it imposes. In this sense, both films stay true to the implications of their narratives to the extent that the circularity, open-endedness, and uncertainty related to popular

urban experiences of driving posit the conventional happy ending as unattainable. Yet in neither of the two films, this unattainability appears as a success: D-Fens is killed, and Max's final subway ride is marked by a new type of uncertainty that is all the more unsettling because it more strongly communicates itself to the character, who still feels unsafe outside of the "screening room" of his cab's steel chassis.

While the two films conclude that "going faster" cannot be the answer to the state's schemes of regimenting movement and of subjecting drivers to the deceptive experience of motorized liberty, they also implicitly reinforce the systems that their protagonists oppose. The anger and resistance of Max and D-Fens is portrayed as justified; yet the dubitable success of the two protagonists' actions provides no tangible clues as to how one might irreversibly break through the dromoscopic simulation's "fourth wall". To walk in L.A., in other words, remains "unimaginable" – as Max's final subway ride and D-Fens's troubled experiences as a flâneur imply, a full recovery from the "spectacular form of amnesia" that is both driving and moviegoing is far less likely than continued complicity in this limited physical and imaginative mobility, in which "everything is to be discovered, everything to be obliterated" (Baudrillard 1988: 9).

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Notes

- 1 Virilio's *dromology* derives its name from the ancient Greek root *dromos*, which signifies a straight paved avenue, but simultaneously implies acts of lucidly traversing it in a speedy manner, i.e. of running and looking.

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City Under Siege: Narrating Mumbai Through Non-Stop Capture

By Yasmin Ibrahim

Abstract

When Mumbai became the target of terror in the 26/11 attack in 2008, the events in that city, like other tragic global events in recent years, were narrated through new media platforms. The increasing convergence of technologies and mobile telephony enabled new forms of gaze and the ability to bear witness through these new media technologies. The non-stop capture of events through recording equipment embedded in mobile phones and their connectivity to the World Wide Web constructed Mumbai through civilian narratives and images, and this phenomenon was described as the "coming of age of Twitter". Conversely the event raised fundamental questions about the role of broadcasting and protocols in live telecasts of terrorist attacks which have consequences for national security. In narrating the city through the civilian gaze and traditional media the spectacle of suffering in postmodernity becomes an open-ended exercise where the city is both a canvas for showcasing the risks of modernity and new forms of visibilities which emerge from social media and the "act of sharing" content on global platforms.

Keywords: Social media, modernity, terrorism, India

Introduction

The attack on Mumbai on the 26th of November 2008 has been described as India's very own 9/11 whilst other press headlines have termed the 60-hour-long siege of the city as nothing short of "the longest running horror show" (Khallur 2008). The terror attack which struck at the heart of the financial and tourist centre claimed at least 172 lives whilst wounding 250 in a series of gun and grenade attacks. A group called Deccan Mujahedeen¹ claimed responsibility for the attack which targeted multiple sites simultaneously including hotels, a Jewish Chabad centre, a café which was popular with foreigners, hospitals and a railway station. Mumbai, after the terror attacks in December 2008, was narrated as a "bleeding city" where hundreds "lit candles to remember the dead and to help deal with the trauma the city suffered" (Dodd 2008).

Suffering, terror and trauma in the urban space, and the non-stop consumption of mediated suffering have become dominant features of postmodernity. Media narratives of suffering have the potential to both personalize and de-personalize suffering to their audiences and in the process they can re-frame proximity and distance, our sense of connection and disconnection as well as temporality. The audience's ability to understand suffering as a phenomenon enacted on a global stage and the media's ability to invite moral gaze and engagement is a recurring phenomenon in postmodernity. The city in postmodern memory becomes a backdrop for terror where the unexpected and volatile can unfold before a global audience. The city since the turbulence of 9/11 in America represents an instable space which contradicts the order, stability and security it is supposed to impose through its form and structure.

Iconic landscapes of a city often function as a symbol of that city. Drawing parallels with 9/11, the Rand study (2009:11) on the 2008 Mumbai attack reiterates that the "the attacks on landmark properties amplified the psychological impact". Additionally, the selection of multiple targets – Americans, Britons and Jews, as well as Indians – suggests that the terrorists intended the attack to serve multiple objectives that extend beyond the terrorists' previous focus on Kashmir and India and to globalise their struggle and illuminate it through international media coverage (Rand Corporation 2009). These religious, political and cultural values were chosen in order to make a statement. According to the Indian Subcontinent Practice of Risk Advisory, the well-planned operations were carried out with an anti-Western aim with the "deliberate selection" of foreign hostages (The Economic Times 28/11/2008).

The attacks on Mumbai extends tropes of visible trauma inflicted on urban spaces since the iconic images of destruction witnessed by the world with the 9/11 attacks in America. Witnessing trauma in urban spaces through live coverage and instant updates constructs trauma as a space of global spectacle where trauma in urbanity has become a television genre that constructs cities as vulnerable targets

for both terror and spectacle. It reiterates Ulrich Beck's (1992) risk analyses that the events of distant and disconnected places can have consequences in our backyards where risk is not contained or responsive to the boundaries of the nation state. The anti-Western and anti-Jewish sentiments of the attackers in Mumbai again brought to fore the vulnerabilities of an interconnected world where chaos and carnage can explode without warning in urban cities and spaces of spatial power.

Zygmunt Bauman (2006), in *Liquid Fear*, terms it "negative globalization" where "there is nothing the others do or can't do of which we may be sure that it won't affect our prospects, chances and dreams" (99). He polemically asserts that "we are all in danger, and we are all dangers to each other and there are only three roles to play – perpetrators, victims and collateral casualties" (206:99). Bauman misses out the fourth role the rest of humanity play which is the role of the post-modern spectator who bears witness to mediated trauma and suffering. The liveness and immediacy of trauma captured through broadcasting and social media (global platforms such as the Internet) seek to democratise suffering and equally construct event creation as an open-ended phenomenon where accuracy of reporting and authenticity of reporting (or witnessing) may be compromised for immediacy characterised by our need to share and locate information in public networks.

During the 60-hour siege of Mumbai, many of the eyewitness accounts emerged from social media including social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr. The explosion of reports in new media networks and the narration of terror as it emerged prompted many media critics to describe it as a "social experimentation" for new media and a coming of age for these new forms of media (See Heussner 2008; D'Amour 2008; Beaumont 2008; Lewis 2008). The event also became a crisis point for traditional broadcasting where there was a public controversy over the reporting of the event. The broadcasting media was charged with irresponsible and sensationalist reporting where each network had succumbed to "market tyranny" by trying to outdo each other with exclusives and inside reports without exercising a sense of self-restraint or respect for those killed in these attacks. The live reporting by broadcast media was also seen as compromising the national security of the nation and anti-Pakistan sentiments amongst the general public.

Urban studies on Mumbai have profiled the different social and economic problems in the city including the issues of housing, infrastructure, development, globalisation, governance, the provision of social amenities, land use and environmental issues (See Tiwari et al. 1999; Mehta 2005; Kamini et al. 2006; Weinstein 2008). Whilst technology has a role to play in both enabling better mobility as well as social and economic divides in the city, this paper departs from conventional urban studies perspectives to construct the city through an act of terrorism

where the role of technology is both seminal in creating communion and fissure in the city.

This paper examines the ways in which the trauma of Mumbai was captured, constructed and narrated during the attack. In particular it profiles how eyewitness accounts and the civilian gaze constructed the city as the terrorist attacks and the ways in which the local and global community related to the narratives of suffering. Equally, the paper explores how the mainstream broadcast media came under intense criticism and scrutiny after the incident. The public and political backlash against the coverage of terror in the city raised the need to install new protocols in the reporting of terrorism or events which can compromise the national security of the country and the rescue operations of the authorities.

Narrating the City of Mumbai

The city of Mumbai is a financial as well as a tourist centre but more importantly it is a dream factory where its film industry provides escapism from harsh reality for millions of ordinary citizens. In recent years Mumbai has been frequently targeted by terrorist attacks blamed on Islamic extremists and these have included a series of bombings in July 2007 that killed 187 people (Fox News 26/11/ 2008). In the 1993 Mumbai attack 257 died in 13 bomb blasts across the city. The city of Mumbai is not unused to terror. Terror in the urban space is undeniably a space of spectacle and often it becomes a media event where television plays a central role. The act of bearing witness to global events through the broadcasting space has been well documented in media literature (see Dayan & Katz 1992; Scannell 1989). In post-modernity the "media event" captures the ability of the media to construct events, reframe temporality and to consolidate the construction of memory through its televisual spectacle. In our recent past, the new media has become inextricably conjoined with traditional media to construct the media event. The media event, whether it is the 2004 Tsunami, 9/11, the 7/7 bombings, the War in Iraq or the Saffron Revolution in Myanmar has been increasingly constructed not just through the vantage point of traditional media but through new media platforms. As Jan Roscoe (2004: 363) points out, as "interactive media opportunities have arisen, content is now being produced, delivered and consumed in new ways and content can be delivered across various platforms, utilising television, the internet, mobile phones and digital and interactive screen services". Roscoe argues that instead of our viewing being controlled through the flow of schedules, which Raymond Williams envisaged, it is now clustered around events. In Mumbai, mobile telephony and new media platforms such as Twitter provided new ways to bear witness to the events and to disseminate them to the global community moments into the attack.

When the city came under siege in December 2008, new media provided an insight into events as they unfolded in the city. India ranks as the third top country

in Asia (after Japan and China respectively) and is fourth largest in the world in terms of internet penetration rates (at 7.1%) with 81 million users as of November 2008 (www.internetworldstats.com). In terms of the population of users in Asia Indians account for 12.5%. The majority of users in India tend to be between 19 and 40 and there is a digital divide between urban and rural areas as well as male and female users with the latter only comprising 15%. Significantly, the city of Mumbai has the largest number of Internet users at 3.24 million in 2008 with chatting and social networking sites being very popular amongst these users (www.indiabroadband.net). This high degree of internet penetration and media literacy was important in showcasing the role of social media when simultaneous attacks occurred in the city.

In the Mumbai attacks Twitter in fact became a stream of snippets from observers on the ground with details of casualties, sieges, gunfights and even the suspected name of terrorists (Lewis 2008). It is estimated that around 70 "tweets" or messages tagged under the label of "Mumbai" were posted every five seconds when the news of the tragedy first broke, according to some estimates (Beaumont 2008). These minute- by-minute details included an update of events, calls for help, as well as a dissemination of emergency numbers. In this sense these sites, which emerged hours within the attack, provided the public service of diverting users to vital contact information such as foreign offices and helpline numbers. Within hours Google documents were created containing lists of the injured and killed whilst others solicited blood donors for those injured and needing emergency care.

Beyond informing the immediate and global community of the events in the city, spaces such as Twitter and Facebook provided a means for people to convey their situation to friends and family. Mumbai Help, a blog which updated information on the Mumbai attack, offered to locate people in Bombay for friends outside the city (Bell 2008). Besides Facebook and Twitter, blogs and file-sharing sites provided accounts and images from the ground. These conversations in the new media landscape also provided a signposting function providing the best news reports appearing on the web (Lewis 2008). These reports compiled by new media users got to the news more quickly than the television reports and newspaper websites. In many instances these twitter and blog reports actually questioned the veracity of mainstream media accounts.

In addition to discursive accounts on the internet and those disseminated through mobile telephony, images played an important role in conveying the terror of the attacks. The convergence of technologies and the embedding of recording equipment in mobile phones and the ability to upload images onto the internet from personal mobile recording devices meant that events could be captured as they unfolded. Photos on Flickr uploaded 90 minutes after the attacks revealed the bloodied streets of Mumbai and helped to communicate the gravity of

the situation. Some of these were viewed at least 110,000 times in the next 48 hours (CBS 2008; Lewis 2008).

The ability to convene audiences and communities through real events and to create and share information through such events has become a predominant feature of how we engage with mediated events. A few hours into the attack, a Google map was created to show the location of buildings and landmarks at the centre of the incidents with links to news stories and eyewitness accounts (Beaumont 2008). Similarly a Wikipedia page was created within minutes of the news breaking and updated thousands of times, providing a vast amount of background information often in real time about the attack and these were detailed and corrected as the event unfolded (CBS 2008; Beaumont 2008; Lewis 2008). These different sources of information created connections to other stories by providing url links and as such they provided means to navigate the information that emerged on the nebulous internet. Dedicated blogs were created to update the events in Mumbai and these included the *Metroblog* set up by a group of bloggers based in Mumbai. Blogs became a site for information as well as commemoration and as such functioned as therapeutic devices to deal with trauma and terror and to equally share nostalgic accounts of what the city meant to its citizens. The Mumbai Heroes blog, for example was created to honour the victims of the attack (CBS 2008).

In addition to informing the outside world of terror attacks in Mumbai, Twitter also provided people who were trapped inside the affected hotels during the siege to communicate with the outside world. The hotel guests trapped in the affected hotels logged onto Twitter to find out whether they were under attack and to get an idea of the chaos that had engulfed them. Twitter captured the drama through conversations and information exchanged between people affected by the situation and those who were observing and engaging with the trauma through traditional and new media platforms. Event creation in the new media age is a complex exercise where there is an intricate enmeshing of information between traditional and new media sources. Mainstream media (both local and foreign) such as print and broadcasting used information that occurred on the Internet in their reports. News stations including CNN used video clips sent in from people on the ground in Mumbai to illustrate their reports and many traditional media outlets including broadcasting stations and newspapers monitored Twitter and blogs in compiling their reports (Beaumont 2008).

The Mumbai attacks come in a long line of events in which the new media accounts have helped build a mediated event for the public. The eyewitness accounts and images published on new media platforms have become a vital part in composing the media event. They provide new forms of visibility and civilian narratives which are often conjoined to mainstream media narratives both through the links in web pages and also due to the fact that mainstream media are increasingly using these reports and accounts in their event creation often asking civilians

to send in their reports and photos to construct the event. Twitter, Flickr and other file-sharing sites became places to both bear witness and engage with the event. This invariably contributed to the creation of the "media event" where the rituals of narrating, consuming and engaging have a functionalist Durkheimian objective of creating communion, patriotism and nationalism.

The accounting of both natural and man-made calamities has become an open-ended phenomenon enabled by the convergence of technologies and the embedding of a vast array of capturing and communication features in mobile telephony. This enables the civilian gaze, which maps events through its own vantage points, to become part of event creation and then to contribute to the media event. In contrast to the mainstream media it is difficult to underpin this gaze to questions of authenticity or truth. Just as the photograph has been subjected to long-running debates on the validity of representation, the civilian gaze whether enabled through image or words is a problematic device in representing and corroborating an event. The gathering and exchange of information on new media sites during crises or watershed political events from politically engaged or civic-minded citizens or those who want to partake through conversations is a much more intricate process that cannot completely be addressed by the term "citizen journalism". Social media such as Twitter enable the ability to engage with "imagined communities" during crises and materialise these imagined communities through conversations and the exchange of information. Twitter technology was seen as "coming of age" and described as a "social media experiment in action" (D'Amour 2008) mainly due to the fact that people were drawn to produce, gaze, and disseminate information whilst connected with the rest of humanity within the city and outside during a crisis. New media platforms such as websites and blogs function as memorials and as performance where they provide spaces to partake in the event (Helmers 2001).

Like placing flower bouquets and notes at accident sites and places of commemoration of tragic events, new media spaces enable audiences to participate discursively with events and to watch and read events beyond the "liveness" of the media event on television. Video platforms enable audiences to view video images and footages disembedded from the media narrative. This decontextualization of events from live broadcasts and seamless narratives re-negotiates the media event as both a collective and fragmented experience in postmodernity and in the age of convergence. New media spaces, by enabling the creation of content by audiences, broaden event creation and in the process interactive media platforms double up as therapeutic sites for recovery and individual and communal meaning-making.

Beyond the functionalist paradigms of new media, the insatiable trading of information presented various challenges. These blow-by-blow Twitter accounts traded at a rate of 50-100 posts a minute in a message were nevertheless fragmented and sometimes false (CBS 2008). Valid and inaccurate accounts were thus

strung into streams of conversation and information on the event mirroring both new forms of empowerment and vulnerabilities evident in the ways in which Mumbai was narrated during the attack. One report on the internet claimed that the Indian government was trying to shut down the Twitter streams as people were using to spread news and information. This story was picked up and reported by the BBC without verifying the validity of the report. The BBC came under criticism for its use of live reports from Twitter in its coverage of the attacks, prompting its news editor Steve Herrmann to acknowledge that the corporation would have to take more care in how it uses "lightening fast, unsubstantiated citizen posts from Twitter in future" (Guardian.co.uk 5/12/2005). On the Internet information can spread very quickly and this gives people the opportunity to spread sensitive or compromising information (Bell 2008) without pausing to understand the implications of such publicised information. Equally, with a plethora of information flowing through these new media platforms it is often difficult to discern what information is credible and often there is a trade-off of accuracy for immediacy (Leggio 2008).

Ironically, whilst technology helped communicate the events to a global audience in this instance, mobile telephony also played a crucial role in enabling the perpetrators to execute their trail of terror in Mumbai. According to the Rand Study (2009) the attackers reportedly used cell phones and a satellite phone - both their own and others taken from their victims - to co-ordinate their activities. The report found that the perpetrators also carried Blackberries and communicated with each other during the siege to discuss their manoeuvres. They made contact with the news media via cell phones to make demands in return for the release of their hostages and this led to some confusion in the Indian authorities who believed that they were dealing with a hostage situation, posing further challenges for their tactical response (Rand Study 2009). The role of telephony during the 2008 Mumbai attack was inevitably double-edged, presenting new forms of empowerment and vulnerabilities in accelerated modernity. In the aftermath of the attacks in Mumbai, when the public perceived that the situation was mishandled by the government, much of the urban middle class vented their anger against the government in new media sites including blogs, social networking sites such as Orkut and Facebook, and text messages (Lakshmi 2008). These media also became the platforms in which to raise objections against the traditional media's coverage of the events and to protest against the government. Internet-savvy protestors also turned to social media platforms to organise protests against the government in the aftermath of the attack.

Television "Terror"

With the recurrent emergence of terror in the ordered spaces of the city, the live coverage of terror has become a familiar genre in our contemporary conscious-

ness. Menaheim Blondheim & Tamar Liebes (2002: 271) note that "when major debacles occur, television interrupts its schedule for the live, open-ended 'celebration' of the momentous event, featuring the disaster marathon". This "disaster marathon", according to them, is defined by natural disasters, high-profile accidents such as the failed launch of the *Challenger* space shuttle, or purposive public acts of major violence such as terrorist attacks.

Dayan and Katz's conception of the "media event" (1992: 196-7) captured television's ability to mark an event or moment in history through the interruption of routine broadcasting. The suspension of usual routines to carve a moment in time where the nation convenes over the televisual space evokes both the power of mass media to create events but equally the conceptualisation of national spaces to mourn and commemorate. The medium's predominance in a public event, Blondheim and Liebes (2002:274) argue, should be situated through electronic journalism's adoption of the live coverage format which positions it in an intermediary role as a storyteller, negotiator and movable stage on which the drama is enacted.

Live coverage is a significant aspect of narrating terror in our accelerated modernity where the "liveness" creates both immediacy whilst impressing the interconnectivity with the wider world. Often when terror happens it is a ritual for the world to watch the terror as it unfolds. At one point during the siege TV news channels in South Mumbai were blacked out for forty-five minutes following an order by the Deputy Commissioner of Police and this created more panic and unease amongst the people (Khallur 2008) emphasising our insatiable need to watch events live and without disruption. In the case of the Mumbai attack, the live coverage in constructing the media event became an issue of contention. More significantly, the aftermath of the Mumbai attack proved that the televised "media event" is not an unproblematic device in forging a collective consciousness. The construction and narration of the event became a point of contention, adding to the public's loss of faith in the government.

The live telecast of the attacks was 60 hours long and the extended coverage of the events which occurred in different parts of Mumbai posed many challenges for broadcasters. The event became a watershed moment for live broadcasting in the country for various reasons but primarily it was deemed as compromising the security of the nation and inciting passion against its neighbour Pakistan with whom it has a tumultuous historical and political relationship. The Indian government liberalized the broadcasting market in the early 1990s by dismantling state controls, encouraging privatization and relaxing media regulations (Thussu 1999: 126). The liberalization of the market and new communication technologies saw a dramatic growth in the number of television channels and transformed the television landscape radically (See Thussu 2007; Butcher 2003). Daya Thussu points out that this ushered the arrival of global media conglomerates into what used to be one of the most closed broadcasting systems in any democracy. Presently, India has seventy-seven 24-hour news channels on the air fighting for the attention

of 80 million Indian homes and 130 licences approved resulting in extraordinary pressure to sensationalize and claim exclusives (Magnier 2009). India is one of the world's largest television markets with an expanding Westernized, middle-class audience of 300 million and this is an attractive lure for transnational media corporations to gain a slice of the lucrative Indian market (Thussu 2007: 594).

Inevitably, the 60-hour long coverage of the events prompted an intense competition amongst channels to outdo each other's reporting. Television channels were criticised for capitalising on human trauma and turning it into a "reality show" (Gupta 2009; Khallur 2008). Additionally broadcasters were criticised for sensationalising their reports but more importantly sabotaging the rescue operations and the national security of the country by revealing sensitive information without restraint or reflection. A media study undertaken by Newswatch, a media watchdog based in New Delhi, shortly after the attack, found that the government-run TV channel DD was the least sensational and most restrained compared to commercial stations (cf. Thakuria 2008). It also found that many channels were overtly sensationalist in their coverage. The survey included 9,906 responses and 74% felt that the reporting was theatrical. The TV coverage of the incident, especially by 24-hour news channels, was criticised as "TV terror" (Pepper 2008). The media was also accused of over-simplifying and dichotomising a complex situation by portraying "Pakistan is the enemy" or "politicians are villains" (cf. Chandran 2008).

In the days following the attack there were robust public discussions on the extent to which the media should be regulated in the public interest and the interests of national security (Gupta 2009; Thakuria 2008; Divan 2008). The live reporting came under scrutiny in parliament as well and it was noted that "live feed of air raids on the rooftop of Nariman House (where the Israeli hostages had been held captive) had taken away the element of surprise which is critical and crucial in rescue operations". There was also fear that live coverage could have been used as free intelligence by the planners of the attacks located far away from the incidents and allegedly guiding the attackers by means of satellite and mobile phone communication to take appropriate emergent measures against security forces (cf. Thankuria 2008).

Criticism of mainstream media was evident in blogs and amongst viewers and became a point of national discussion with politicians questioning the role of the media in such situations. The media was also accused of pointing the finger towards Pakistan without understanding the full nature of the attacks. The stations portrayed the commandos sent to rescue the hostages as brave whilst repeatedly showing Indian flags. In the days following the attacks, the Indian flag was often used by broadcasters as a visual backdrop with viewers' text messages expressing anger at politicians or Pakistan scrolling at the bottom of the screen (Chandran 2008). Such cultural references were seen as irresponsible in influencing and inciting public opinion against Pakistan given the state of tension between the two

countries. Prominent film director Mahesh Bhatt criticised the CNN-IBN news channel of encroaching on his territory after the channel played Bollywood songs from movies about wars between India and Pakistan during news updates;

It's what we do in the movies – whipping up passion – and what was at stake, but a nuclear holocaust (referring to the nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan). You use the same tools – you keep the audience on a continuous high (cf. Pepper 2008).

Pakistan's media duly criticised Indian broadcasters of being in a "race for propaganda" and "providing unsubstantiated" charges about the origins of the attackers (D'Amour 2008). With the coverage of the media coming under intense public scrutiny, a parliamentary committee expressed concerns over the repeated display in the media of human corpses during natural calamities, accidents, bomb blasts, arson etc. (Thankuria 2008; Pepper 2008). A few weeks after the attack the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting mooted a proposal to amend the existing Programme Code under the Cable Television Rules of 1994 by introducing 19 new amendments. These included proposals to introduce restrictions amongst other things on live coverage of war or violent law and order situations, disclosures about security operations, live interviews with victims, security personnel or perpetrators of crime (cf. Divan 2008). Additionally, the South Asia Media Commission (SAMC) in its report "South Asia Media Monitor 2008" slammed the media both in India and Pakistan for promoting hysteria (Gupta 2009).

The broadcast media were not seen as abiding by the self-regulatory code of ethics and standards adopted by the New Broadcasters Association comprising of 14 networks. Whilst the attacks illuminated the role of social media in such a situation, the print and broadcast media were seen as immature and not exercising the kind of self-regulation which was felt to be warranted in a highly explosive environment where they could have incited further violence or communal riots. The media on its part felt that the authorities did not have proper protocols in place in reporting on emergency situations. The Indian Broadcasting Federation and the News Broadcasting Association which represents many of country's top news channels criticised the government for "failing to keep up with the developments in the media industry" and not being proactive in "creating a procedure for the coverage of national emergencies" (cf. D'Amour 2008).

The authorities were seen as failing to protect the public as they lacked a clear information and communication management strategy. The lack of orchestration in feeding information to the media was raised as another important factor that led to uncontrolled and chaotic reporting. In the post-event discussions about the role of the media it was pointed out that the authorities such as the Navy themselves fed details to the media without restraint. In addition to this, different authorities gave separate and contradictory accounts and versions to the media. The absence of a concerted media management by the authorities was seen as contributing to the chaotic nature of reporting. Besides irresponsible reporting TV stations were also seen as elitist in their reporting where they concentrated on the hostages at

the Taj Mahal Palace and Trident-Oberoi hotels, which are the domains of the country's wealthy and ruling elites, whilst largely ignoring Chhatrapati Shivaji train terminus which was the site of the largest number of casualties and where a total of 58 people were gunned down (Pepper 2008). TV stations were also accused of other forms of bias beyond class divides. For example, the British and American media focused largely on their own citizens.

In response to the criticisms from the general public and from the members of parliament, the National Broadcaster's Association, which represents many of the country's top news channels, announced a new set of rules for the industry in December 2008. These new guidelines ban broadcasting of footage that would reveal security operations and live contact with hostages or attackers (Pepper 2008). The guidelines also request broadcasters to avoid unnecessary repetition of archival footage which might agitate viewers (televisionpoint.com). Many of these guidelines still hinge on self-regulation as the guiding principle. Undoubtedly the effectiveness of these guidelines and their ability to fully resist the "tyranny of the market" may well be tested if another such incident were to occur in India.

The broadcasting of the disaster marathon in Mumbai prompted the public to question the construction of the "media event" by mainly 24-hour news channels. Unlike the new media, which was seen as reaching a new maturation point with the terror attack, the broadcast media was perceived as regressing and failing to observe a role that was ethical or responsible in protecting the national interest of the country.

Conclusion

The city of Mumbai, with its famous film production facilities, is a place for myth- and dream-making. In November 2008, when terror gripped the celluloid city, the urban space of accelerated modernity was transformed into a site of chaos, carnage, suffering and media spectacle. The postmodern city is a vulnerable space prone to violent disruption through acts of terror and where global communities can convene and consume terror through the media space. The 60-hour siege of Mumbai in became a testing ground for new media technologies and their role in responding to long and sustained periods of crises. The potential for both new forms of empowerment and risks were highlighted by the new media technologies where immediacy rather than authenticity became primary. On the other hand, the political economy of news making in India has raised serious concerns about how chasing exclusive deals and sensationalising terror attacks or rescue operations can be detrimental for the country. The broadcast media through its engagement with the Mumbai siege has been forced to review its role in a crisis and to abide by new protocols. More importantly, the siege of Mumbai showed that the "media event" is not an uncontested terrain where broadcast media can tell a story through freeze-framing of images and seamless narratives. In Mumbai

audiences engaged with the mediated accounts of terror provided by the media and duly questioned the media event. The media's power to be the supreme story teller or to appropriate and subsume an event through its production codes came under intense scrutiny. In the process the power of the media was questioned and the will of the audience was reasserted in demanding a more responsible broadcasting space.

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Notes

- 1 Evidence suggests that Lashkare-Taiba (LeT), a terrorist group based in Pakistan, was responsible for the attack (Rand Study 2009:11). The Rand study elaborates that the Pakistan-based terrorists see India as part of the "Crusader-Zionist-Hindu" alliance, and therefore the enemy of Islam. "Muslim" Kashmir ruled by majority "Hindu" India, provides a specific cause, but LeT has always considered the struggle in Kashmir as part of the global struggle, hence the specific selection of Americans and Britons as targets for murder, and the inclusion of the Jewish Chabad center as a principal target (2009:11).

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Exploring Urban Screens

By Zlatan Krajina

Abstract

There is a tautological tendency in the widespread claims that urban space is ‘mediated’. Never before has the citizen, it is argued, been confronted with such an unprecedented array of signage. I depart from the rhetoric of ‘biggest-ever-saturation’ as not necessarily untrue, but as insufficient in exploring the diverse spatial operations of urban screens. I examine some contemporary cases of animated architectural surfaces, informational panels, and advertising billboards, with reference to much longer standing cultural practices of spatial management in modern cities, such as illumination, to suggest that the contemporary display media do not mediate the city anew but re-invent urban space as a field of ubiquitous mediation. From that standpoint I suggest exploring urban screens as a) both singular visual agents and indivisible items in plural structural assemblages, b) complementary forces of public illumination, and c) complex perceptual platforms in visual play of scale and distance.

Keywords: Urban screens, media, light, city, architecture.

Introduction

It has been commonplace in media studies to discuss contemporary media abundance, whereby display media in urban space have come to serve a handy proof that it is becoming harder and harder to escape the exposure to media. With every new study on the contemporary media landscape we hear, repeatedly, that “the old television set has morphed from a small-scale appliance – a material object primarily associated with domestic space – to become a large-scale screen; less a piece of furniture than an architectural surface resident not in the home but in the street outside” (McQuire 2008: 130). At the same time, the agreement about the fact that media messages are now everywhere is also where discussions related (even remotely) to urban screens terminate. It is time to turn the mere recognition of urban screens into a point of departure, rather than arrival, and to move forward by addressing possible pathways towards exploring particular communicational modes of urban screens. The occasional specialised studies in the technological advances in display electronics (e.g. Schoch 2007, Schoch 2008), perceptual effects (e.g. Offenhuber 2008), and potentials for the community belonging and socialisation (e.g. Struppek 2006) notwithstanding, the less obvious spatial practices associated with urban screens, such as their luminous activities, are rarely given detailed inspection. In this article I take a grounded view to offer some preliminary guidance in studying urban screens as spatial agents in the ubiquitous play of visibility and distance, which is as old as cities themselves.

Circulating the idea of a ‘media-saturated’ world (cf. Bird 2003; cf. also Newcomb 1988), especially in terms of audience research, media studies have made only passing, if any, specific reference to the urban display media (cf. Ang 1996; Moores 2000; Bird 2003; Livingstone 2005; Couldry 2005). Moores in his *Media and Everyday Life in Modern Society*, for instance, asks “what position have television, radio and other electronic media like telephones and computers come to occupy in people’s day-to-day lives and social relationships?” (2000: 1). Crucially, his important discussions thereof remain centrally anchored in the realm of home. Even a reference to “urban neighbourhood” indexes a broader social context for discussing media consumption in urban households (ibid.). To take another example, Gitlin’s media studies tour de force *Media Unlimited* addresses the increasingly mediated city more explicitly, but goes no further than ascertaining media abundance as a fact of (contemporary) life in the cities. He suggests that contemporary enquiries into everyday media usage, being particularly sensitive to the possible “contraband” in media consumption, risk overseeing its essence, which, for him, is “the immensity of the experience of media, ... the devotions and rituals that absorb our time and resources” (2001: 4–5). If in one culture more than in another, never before has the citizen been confronted with such an unprecedented array of signage, whereby we are “bathing ourselves in images and sounds” in response to the media’s “promise of feeling” (ibid. 4, 6, 14). Accord-

ing to Gitlin, the “baffling media totality”, with its “shimmering multitude of images and sounds”, makes “[the] iconic plenitude ... the contemporary condition” (ibid. 11, 14). However, the condition of “media saturation” (ibid. 9) in its seeming self-explanatory nature in effect finds itself trapped in a deterministic prism of continually hungry media users. The specific operations of urban screens in the public space of streets, squares and passages, side by side with myriad other sources of stimuli, remain under-explored.

If urban screens appear as formative substances to everyday scenographies in (post)modern cities (McCarthy 2001; McQuire 2008: 146, 25; Wilken 2006: 31), we can only explore the screens with a sound sensitivity to their principal context: the broader tension between the strive of the planners to create urban space according to coherent maps drawn from macro vantage points, and its lived realities taking place fragmentarily, at the mobile pedestrian vantage points (cf. de Certeau 1984). Media have been utilised in this tension on both ends of the micro – macro divide, so that one could almost read off the dynamic changes in urban space from the media-related activities: at first it was the photographs and the cinema that helped in making sense of urban pace and spatial growth, and now it is technologies such as geospatially responsive mobile phones and large scale urban screens. McQuire approached the initial complication of making sense of the myriad forms of mediations in the city in terms of *media – city* conjunction that “emerges through a complex process of co-constitution between architectural structures and urban territories, social practices and media feedback” (2008: vii). Fornäs, similarly, ascertains that “cities are from the start mediated as well as mediating machines, and media always already co-construct urban settings” (2006: 9). However, when confronted with the need for a closer inspection of particular cases, such as urban screens, these relevant theorisations inevitably sound tautological. The confirmation that the intertwining nature of city and media is fated by the fact that the two realms share an intrinsic structural logic of fostering communication within and across socially organised space is a helpful framework but an insufficient tool in scrutinising urban screens.

One important way out of the ‘saturation’ blind alleys is, as I seek to illustrate, in investigating the screens in terms of urban spatial dynamics that the screens are tied into, which lie behind the easily recognisable functional uses. For that purpose, we must approach the screens (as pedestrians often do), so to say, from a side street, being suspicious of their taken-for-granted positions and operations, rather than from the main road, from where the specialist literature ardently updates its taxonomic catalogues. Thereby the screens are public display media that either convey information (news and transport information overlays), allow exchange of information (street kiosks), advertise (billboards), or serve architectural design (media façades) or public art (installation screens), all in a number of forms (textual information, moving or still images), and in variable scale. Urban space is a field of ever-complex spatial relations between its designers and users

in a continuous interplay of continuity and flux. In order to scrutinise its dynamic practices, we need a spatial epistemology with the grounded eye-level approach that investigates the screens as they appear *across* different scales and individual forms.

Conceptually, I would broaden Moores's concern with the place of media-saturation in everyday life, Gitlin's call to recognise saturation as "the contemporary condition", and McQuire's notion of the ubiquity of the "media city" with Couldry and McCarthy's assertion that media saturation in fact means saturation with "images of other *places* and other (imagined or real) *orders of space*" (2004: 1, my emphasis). This is precisely the rationale that I propose for a study of urban screens, that is, their physical occupations of public space, image-based deliveries of various 'elsewheres', and territorial augmentation by the means of light. If we agree that "it is ever more difficult to tell a story of social space without also telling a story of media and vice versa" (ibid.), rather than 'mediated' anew in the spirit of the 'everywhere-mediation' from the beginning, the city is in terms of display media better seen as *re-mediated* along much older spatial vectors and practices.

Detouring episodically from historical accounts to contemporary cases, in this article I look for most helpful multifaceted junctions, seeking not a set of definite formulas but a specialised consideration of broader analogies through which the publicly displayed screens might be understood. My methodological rationale thus finds its most suitable expression in Morley's (2006: 33) "multidimensional model" of theoretical synthesis, "which builds new insights on to the old, in a process of dialogue transformation which, if necessarily at points selective, is none the less synergetic and inclusive by inclination". I adopt what Qvortrup calls "a pluralist ontology" (1997: 169) in exploring visual activities in the city as spatial activities (cf. Soja 2003). In the first part of the paper I make some preliminary points through contributions from extant literature on how urban and architectural design makes use of visual media in their arrangements of public space, and the pioneering attempt at deciphering the out-of-home television, Anna McCarthy's "Ambient Television" project. In the second part, drawing on my current research, I discuss three key aspects of urban screens that I suggest for exploratory strategies of future studies. Firstly, I argue that urban screens can best be understood as both the singular display media and as indivisible properties of urban structures in complex local contexts. Secondly, I suggest that the vector persisting through epochs of urban change and everyday habituation, relevant for a study of urban screens, is that of *illumination*, not necessarily as leading, but as one important dimension of a continually (re)mediated city. By extension to understanding the urban screens as forces of artificial light, I finally consider how the illuminative effects of urban screens are configured in distancing the source of emanation from its output, that is, of separating the material background electricity from the resulting imagery.

Preliminary Points

Visual Dynamics of Urban Space

Visual media have played the key role in urban spatial ordering. The cities of antique, medieval and renaissance ages articulated “the hierarchy of social and political relationships ... and collective memory” by achieving visual supremacy of religious or monarchic edifices, whilst fencing the town with walls or gates (McQuire 2008: 17). Thereby, the fluctuation of citizens was readily available by sight (ibid.). By the mid-18th century the rapid growth of cities required more sophisticated technological means in securing order. The system of ‘reflector lanterns’ (*réverbères*) made the lit zones of the city perceived easily as *all there is* of the city (cf. Schivelbusch 1995: 93, 95). The Parisian riots needed only to smash individual lanterns in order to ‘erase’ the lit territories (ibid. 98, 106-107, 142). With the proliferation of the public system of electric lighting by the end of the 19th century, the idea of “[artificial] light as a guarantor of public morals, safety and order” persisted (ibid. 134). Soon, photography lent a useful ‘mapping’ tool in rendering the city space as “available to perception, cognition and action” (McQuire 2008: ix). ‘Capturing’ the bodies in the streets with the image-based media heralded the public visual culture that will later take shape of surveillance systems and heated debates about privacy. Hence the visually apprehended urban terrain operates in a double logic of urban image circulation: that of collecting visual data and projecting images publicly. Acknowledging the paralleled ubiquity of the former, I attend to the latter by looking at a different set of important processes.

The swift development of industrial urban areas from the late 19th century onwards went hand in hand with the advent of a set of transport and communication technologies, such as trains, cars, electricity, telephones, elevators, radio, photography and film (cf. McQuire 2008: ix, 56-57). At the turn of the century “the urban-industrial life-world was transformed beyond recognition in little more than a generation” (ibid. 57). The contemporary “megalopolis” in the contexts of post-industrial society, globalisation and speed (ibid. 88), as Gitlin suggests, “sprouted communication technologies, cultivated discontinuities and interruptions, invited simultaneity, demanded an omnidirectional, all-purpose alertness” (2001: 84), which, if only briefly, takes us back to the starting point: the abundance of (predominantly visual) stimuli in the city. Following Nead (2007: 109), what is at stake in the current discussions about the experiential dimensions of urban life as sensational shocks is an uncritical generalisation of what Georg Simmel initially witnessed in the 1900s as “the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli” (2002: 11). As Nead details, the difficulty is “when Simmel’s work is adopted literally”, particularly having “cinema ... drawn into this narrative as ... the form that most nearly expresses the pace and discontinuities of

modern life” (2007: 109). To take the case of London, the then largest city in the world, perhaps more caution would be advisable in making such generalisations. The city has been, since its earliest modern development, a place of *diversity*, particularly in terms of density of urban stimuli (ibid. 109–130). This is not to deny busy fluctuations of bodies and goods through the city traffic, but to acknowledge a paralleled “individual anecdote and character” (ibid. 110–111), or, in Massey’s current update, “a field of multiple actors, trajectories, stories with their own energies—which may mingle in harmony, collide, even annihilate each other” (2007: 22; cf. ibid. 29–52). The double logic of the urban image circulation thus homes a dynamic field not of constant movement nor stillness but their individually and institutionally motivated interchange. It is principally in this elementary context that the urban screens must be examined. The cultural analogies of mobility and change hand in hand with stasis and continuity have found their most articulate expression in singular architectural practices.

Animated Surfaces

As I indicated above, the modern terrain of the city is increasingly difficult to be conceived of in any other way “except in bits and pieces” (Harvey 1989: 66, 69), which owes much to the contemporary history of architecture. Towards the end of the 20th century, architecture pursued an epistemological distinction between, albeit not a final break with, the inheritance of modernist functional “planning”, as a solution for urban crisis (ibid. 66–69), and the postmodernist “design” of “singular objects of architecture” (cf. Baudrillard and Nouvel 2002) as, by intentions of the architects, a challenge to the macro planning strategies (cf. Hays 2003: 129, 130; Hays 1995: 42; Wilken 2006: 137). The latter tendency has in recent years been increasingly mobilised in implementing moving image screens in designing façades. The outer skin of a building is said to be animated by the means of display technology covering its entire surface, or even challenging the very notion of *façade* as a solid plane of construction with the notion of a *node* of information circulation.

In architectural terms, the two key purposes essentially assumed for buildings, those of providing “shelter” and “symbol”, are in that process separated to the maximum, at the expense of “shelter” (Bouman 1998b: 62). The shelter/symbol conflation is not new: “baroque domes were symbols as well as spatial constructions, and they are bigger in scale and higher outside in order to dominate urban setting and communicate their symbolic message” (Venturi *et al.* 1977: 13). However, in the case of contemporary urban screens (either as add-ons or as entire front façades), the physical separation of the emanating surface from the surrounding carrying walls makes evident, creates two different regimes of signification, one primarily symbolic and the other formal.¹ In that sense, buildings with urban screens are most helpfully recognised as “decorated sheds”, as Venturi *et al.* suggest for much of the mediated architecture in Las Vegas, and not merely as

“symbols” themselves (ibid. 87), as the current industry of media façades would have it (cf. Bouman 1998b). I return to the architectural cohabitation of the ‘virtual’ and the ‘real’ in the case of urban screens later. The afore-mentioned Bouman’s contention, which confirms Venturi *et al.*’s standpoint, is a practical way around otherwise lengthy debates about the status of the electronic signage in architectural outfit. The value-laden question of whether electronic signs are “inevitable and good” in otherwise historical architecture’s practice of enhancing the building’s appearance (Venturi *et al.* 1977), or whether they merely serve “escapist” architectures that have nothing to do with the “traditional task of cultural symbolization” (Harries 1988: 38), is not to be taken up here. I am more interested in looking at the formal play of the built environments, individual buildings and display technologies.

Architecture and urban design are commonly seen as disciplines “strongly focused on the intentional processes and practices of place-making” (Wilken 2006: 137), much of which is still yielded both to the modernist thrive towards efficiency and productivity as well as the postmodernist advocacy of excess. Amongst the architects of the 1970s who foresaw “the tail end of “paper architecture””, such as Koolhaas, De Portzamparc, Liebeskind and Tschumi, Elisabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio pioneered the usage of “electronically mediated presence as a creative working principle, a means of interrogating the contemporary built environment and the visual culture that surrounds us” (Goldberg 2003: 46, Dimendberg 2003: 67; cf. Betsky 2003: 24). Against the utopian modernist promise of technology as a guardian of controllable efficiency that discursively heralded a better future, Diller and Scofidio’s projects of moving images façades “us[e] technologies generatively rather than representing them formally” (Schafer 2003: 97), with, as Diller once explained, the aim of “interrogating spatial conventions of the everyday” (quoted in Park 1996: 92). For the artistic interventions in public space, be they on a large scale of façades or on a small scale of individual monitors, the usage of screens “is a matter of the right tool for the particular job” (ibid.), in critically *displaying* the contemporary ubiquity of display (cf. Betsky 2003: 23).²

The advancement in projection technologies, which encompassed adaptability to an array of three-dimensional built forms, remote manageability of contents and their colourful, clear and dynamic presentation, hand in hand with commercial success, allowed a steady proliferation of moving-image architectural surfaces. The “video walls” have been named the fifth on the list of formerly four key elements of construction, namely “wood, steel, glass and concrete” (Blueprint 2005: 32), and acquired a wide-circulating vocabulary that assumes a formal fusion of ‘media’ and ‘architecture’, with terminology that scoops “media façades” (ag4 2006), “moving surfaces” (Bouman 1998b), “interactive architectures” (Bouman 1998c), “electronic billboards” (Sadin 2007), “hypersurface” (cf. Perrella 1998), “mediarchitecture” (cf. Thomsen 1996a, 1996b), “mediatecture” (cf. Wirths

2001), or “digital walls” (cf. Blueprint, June 2005). The advertising industry responded quickly. A rapid diversification of commercial services spanned domains such as “multi-dimensional activities”, “urban development”, “telemarketing”, “micromarketing” and “outdoor advertising” (cf. Mattelart 1991: 23, 62), all targeting the potential customer via electronic billboards “as a behavioural assemblage of eyes, legs, and pocketbook moving through a giant visual assembly” (McCarthy 2001: 74; cf. Smythe 1981: 27).

Whilst the industry works to perfect the display technologies to suit the customers' needs in achieving satisfactory ‘brand recap rates’ in transient exposures to the screens, postmodernist philosophy pursues theoretical critique. It sees electronic representations of ‘elsewhere’ in built public space as totalising in their alleged blurring of the real and the simulated (Baudrillard 1994). Public places like airports or supermarkets, where the electronic screens proliferate, allegedly become uniformed “non-places” (Augé 1995). Centrally, the idea of the image-drenched quotidian has served as a staple for certain streams of Marxist critique of the capitalist society. Debord’s famous viewpoint, originating in the particular post-1968 critique of consumerist culture, understands the contemporary society as “society of spectacle”, whereby “all that once was directly lived has become mere representation” (1995: 12). However, the situation has gotten much more complicated than that. If “representation” is one obvious feature of the spread of digital technologies in the city, its ubiquity also, by a rule, reproduces the importance of physical *place*, which is, moreover, an “essential” category in “pervasive computing” (McCullough 2004: 98, 103). To take the example of “geodata”, as advanced contemporary forms of the classic spatial mapping, “information is taken from places to remote centers of compilation, architecture, and analysis, from which it is then sent back into the field to let people know about where they are” (ibid. 105). As McCullough put it,

There is no escaping the fact that the world around is being layered with digital systems. ... Whatever our desire for “sense of place”, we seem destined to get “places with sense”. ... Smart spaces recognize at least something about what is going on in them, and then they respond (ibid. 172).

Rather than merely assuming that, with modern capitalism, as Marx and Engels posited, “all that is solid melts into the air” (1848/2005), an enquiry in contemporary public cultures should not lose sight of the fact that “people still stretch for solid ground” (Gitlin 2001: 127), or, the variably “digital ground” (McCullough 2004), where social life continues. This is particularly so with the heterogeneous spatial agency of outdoor screens.

Ambient Screens

Anna McCarthy’s pioneering study “Ambient Television” investigated out-of-home placements of television across public places in North America and examined the medium in the light of its complex spatial operations (2001: 14). The

complexity here is essentially in the fact that ambient television as an object semantically fuses with its surrounding so that it is at times rather difficult to be readily distinguished from its surrounding, *and* operates as a distinctly suggestive interface between its images and the moving subjects. McCarthy is essentially confronted, as this study is, with the immense variability of forms and uses of television in public places, whose initial complication she embraces as the foremost characteristic of ambient television and offers a helpful short route in understanding the out-of-home screens as “site-specific” media.

McCarthy examines ambient television through a range of cases of ambient television’s ‘site-specificity’, such as the post-war masculine setting of the tavern, the feminine discourses of consumption in department stores, the subversive potentials of installation art, points-of-purchase and waiting rooms. The variety of spatial operations of the medium in particular cases can be drawn together between its institutional placements (next to the cues, in the waiting rooms, on the shelves), local appropriations (such as momentary escapist ‘travels’ to other sites) and standard television’s audio-visual grammars of expression (programme flow, pre-recorded material in loop, textual layout next to physical objects, etc.). To sum up,

Diverse site-specific practices of television convey the spatial complexity of the medium, its ability both to position people in physical locations and to render visible the entwined domains of contest, control, and consumption that define such places within broader cultural logics of space (ibid. 3).

McCarthy’s micro-macro perspective on ambient television in semi-public and public places urges us to tune any exploration of urban screens to whatever situational contexts the screen embodies or occasions when displayed in the street, square or a passage. The field of city streets where many more agents compete for attention requires that McCarthy’s implication of centrality of the screens in public space, which assumes as well a central role of television in “shaping public and private space” (ibid. 117), is rethought. McCarthy’s interest is with the power interplays in “what the TV set does outside the home – what social acts it performs, or is roped into, ... and which subjects it silences or alternatively gives a voice” (ibid. 1). While I find these questions important in investigating the contemporary television cultures, I am wary of seeing the screen simply as “an object around which a number of everyday human activities are focused: not only viewing but also eating, drinking, exercising, waiting, reading, and many other routine aspects of daily life besides” (ibid. 225). This proposition could reductively install the spectacles of technological determinism which can prevent us from recognising, quite simply, that many other routines in public space, especially walking, remain less directly related with the presence of a screen, or that they even, of course, are carried out regardless of it. Although the experiential sensorium of a passer-by is not the concern of this paper, it is, however provisionally, important to keep in mind how institutional organisation of public space might impinge on bodily fluctuation, especially through the example of space designed for waiting.

Despite the continuing mysteries of the consumer's 'black box' (cf. Mattelart 1991: 169), advertising in public waiting space appeared as a problem-solving tool for the shortcomings of home spectatorship and its possibility to "zap" their messages with the remote controls or power switches (McCarthy 2001: 99). Ambient television gave advertisers reasons to imagine the final "captivity" of the audience enabled by a "lack of competitive separation" (quoted in McCarthy, *ibid.* 99) in the remote control-less zones of televisual viewing, whereby audiences are "immobilized by necessity within a particular place for a particular amount of time" (*ibid.* 100). This is perhaps why McCarthy had no other way of dealing with 'ambient television' but in terms of 'site-specificity' and to claim, in turn, that every place gives way to distinct institutional screen positionings and local appropriations. While this, as I am to illustrate, remains true in urban space, the assessment of urban screens in the city will have to account for many more agents that take part in the dynamic field of the street.

This is particularly evident in the case of JCDecaux's LED display screen with 18m² of advertising surface on the Old Street roundabout in London, where the eight-second long still images of advertisements interchange with the Sky News headlines and weather (see Figure 1). As the executive from the company David Lambert told me, they chose the location based on the satisfactorily high traffic count, and decided to use quick still images in response to the perceived transitory nature of the site. The company rented the wall on the London Underground's generator building to offer space for the advertisers who seek to address multiple audiences: the ones on the bicycles, the walkers, people on the buses, in the cars, the underground passengers, etc. The junction, where the commercial City borders the continuously regenerated East End, is a place of passage for many, and of temporary stopping for others. The large size of the screen and the its position above the heads of pedestrians require sufficient distance to be taken if the images are to be grasped clearly. The images interchange in a seamless flow that runs in parallel to the heterogeneous rhythms of passing subjects: some talking on their mobile phones, or with their friends, or carrying the groceries, others waiting on someone, or reading the free newspapers distributed nearby.



Figure 1: The Old Street screen in the contexts of rain, evening luminous spillage, and busy traffic on a sunny day.

In the midst of other stimuli, such as traffic, nearby construction work and other printed posters, the screen in Old Street is also surrendered to the atmospheric conditions. In the afternoon, the setting sun hits the surface directly, which makes it hard to read off the messages projected (despite its strategically constructed black frame). In the early morning, the rising sun shines from behind the screen so brightly that it causes the passers-by to turn their heads away. The rain, on the other hand necessitates using umbrellas, which cover not only the atmospheric, but also luminous spillage from above the head. In the evening, the screen sheds light on the pavement so that it secures a well lit place which friends use to meet at nights out – one situational outcome of the fact that with the rented two-dimensional wall space urban screens occupy much larger, three-dimensional territories. Although its standard formula was pre-figured in response to the rhythms perceived at the site, the screen is kept on constantly, emanating indifferently at all times. However, despite the local spatial structurings such as passage design, fencing, etc.,³ the site remains relatively open to the situational poetics of circumstance: looking at the screen to avoid eyesight of others, leaning on the fence whilst waiting on someone, etc. The combinations of myriad elements in the situations of public mediations are endless, however much their meanings are attempted to be closed, the urban screens being one agent therein.

In addition to illustrating the need to broaden McCarthy's rationale of site-specificity to the contingency of public urban space, my brief spatial analysis of the screen in London's Old Street also signalled a set of key aspects that a study of urban screens could account for – the plurality of local contextual elements, the clashing forces of light, and the dimensions of distance and size. These three key dimensions respectively form the premises that I propose for a study of urban screens and I shall now expand on them one by one, by asking:

On which premises can we most helpfully make sense of the individual panels with respect to the multiple contexts in which they operate?

Which possible underlying spatial dimension connects the screens in different places, forms, usages, and scales?

Which visual vectors allow the urban screens to perform the suggestive appeal towards winning incidental pedestrian attention?

Exploratory Premises

Singular and Plural

Although it might seem that researching urban screens means 'reading' them as singular objects of mediation, we must keep in mind that display media rarely appear as entities separate from other elements in environmental inventory. Urban screens can be found in what Bausinger called "media ensemble[s]", whereby the everyday technologies are explored "conjuncturally" with other items (1984: 349, 346).⁴ Sadin's more recent travelogues from a number of world megalopolises suggest, identically, that an urban screen "is rarely isolated and is almost always displayed inside a larger ensemble ... according to an almost uninterrupted continuum" (2007: 68-70).⁵ Thus what is seen in the city is far from simple. Technologically, the screens proliferated into "daylight compatible LED billboards, plasma screens exposed in shop windows, beamboards, information displays in public transport systems, electronic city information terminals, holographic screen projections", etc. (Struppek 2006). In response to the growing variability of their forms, sizes, and uses, I refer to urban screens in grounded spatial terms rather *generatively*, as the display media exhibited across urban surfaces. Urban screens are incorporated in the urban space through diverse practices such as architectural design or advertisement, but in grounded terms, I would argue, it remains more urgent to understand the ways in which the screens, whatever technological 'type' they may be identified with, compose broader structures with their surroundings. It is in this sense that we must consider an *environmental character* of urban screens.

On the face of it, such a viewpoint bears some agreement with McLuhan's determinist orthodoxy, at the centre of which is the famous viewpoint that "new media are not bridges between man and nature: they are nature" (1969: 14). In other words, the media's presence in the common milieu is, in its ubiquity, tantamount

to being imperceptible, which, according to Lister *et al.* (2003: 89), marks the “elevation of the media above the message”. From that point of view, Schivelbusch is right to notice in his social history of the industrialisation of electric light that “in light-based media, light does not simply illuminate existing scenes; it creates them” (1995: 220). McLuhan similarly has no doubt about the fact that “a light bulb creates an environment by its mere presence” (2001: 8). It is, in that respect, true that, as I will demonstrate later with the illustrations from London’s bus stops, “it is not till the electric light is used to spell out some brand name or message that it is noticed as a medium” (*ibid.* 9). However, behind McLuhan’s media-as-environment rationale there consistently lurks the tenacious idea of media as autonomous agents in the broader social “change”, which implies users as somehow devoid of agency. On that point I diverge from his famous technological determinist media-as-message motto, whereby the “social and cultural change” is causally linked with “the way media work as environments” (McLuhan and Fiore 1967: 26). Should we accept the micro mediations from the users of technologies such as mobile phones, urban kiosks, or laptops, which always individually complicate the macro urban lighting vistas (see Figure 7), we must position the media-as-environment premise side by side with the media-in-environment assumption.⁶

The singular-and-plural premise I propose nears us to the frame of analysis proposed by Debray to examine media in their “technology-culture interactions” as “intermediary procedures” that are “at once technological, cultural and social” (1996: 12, 17).⁷ From the vantage point offered by Debray, McLuhan’s idea of media-as-environments is released of its techno-determinist cargo and is supplemented with Debray’s urge to take into account the contents of communicated messages and systems of meanings, side by side with the domains of apparatuses and power relations (*ibid.* 18). However, it may potentially be unending to investigate all these aspects exhaustively by following Debray’s proposal to study “*the mediasphere, or middle ground, setting or environment [milieu] of the transmission and carrying [transport] of messages and people*” (*ibid.* 26, original emphases, original insertions). Ours is an interest in the visual operations of display media across this all-encompassing frame. But let us give the “middle ground” idea, proposed by Debray, some more attention, although with a different pair of spectacles.

If we agree that a medium connotes “something that is intermediate between two qualities or degrees” (Nead 2007: 1), or, if we, more rigorously, posit media as “spaces of action for constructed attempts to connect what is separated” (Zielinski 2006: 7), we might be able to examine urban screens without denying their environmental embedded-ness. Recalling Gitlin’s recognition that the display screens shine “bright, brighter than ordinary reality” (2001: 20), we may find useful Schivelbusch’s historical account on the industrialisation of electric light, whereby the inventors counted on the fact that “the more brightly a picture is lit and the darker the position from which it is observed, the more distinct it appears”

(1995: 206). It was upon this principle, that the 19th century theatre saw the opportunity of having the viewers focus on the stage more than the auditorium and to transform the theatre from “a social place ... into a mystical one” (ibid. 206, 210). The logic behind darkening the auditorium before the brightly lit stage was in the fact that “the power of artificial light to create its own reality only reveals itself in darkness” (ibid. 221). Accordingly, the electronic displays as spatial agents may preserve high potential in attracting the incidental spectatorship when positioned in darkened surroundings. Thereby, the display is discerned as an object *in relation to its background*, of which it simultaneously forms a part. Although assuming the dichotomy light—darkness, that is, artificial light—natural darkness, this principle does not exclude the fact that, as Venturi *et al.* (1977: 52) remind us, an electronic sign may be effective during the day as well:

[It] works as a polychrome sculpture in the sun and as black silhouette against the sun; at night it becomes the source of light. It revolves by day and becomes a play of lights at night.

Before I consider the “play of lights” (ibid.) more closely in the next section, I want to give more attention to the atmospheric and other environmental conditions in which the designers situate the screens. Increasingly, the creation of a single urban screen in close concert with the surrounding assemblages of signification and stimuli, is becoming a professional prerequisite for success. Most commonly couched in terms of “contexts”, the specialist circles increasingly show awareness of the complexity of “culture, climate, background, audience and built pattern” on the ground (Schoch 2007: 576). As Offenhuber summons, design strategies take on board both the planned imagery (that the local population is assumed to be “familiar” with) and the screen as a material object,⁸ which may “imitate” other physical objects in close surrounding, such as a bus schedule (2008), or a concrete façade.

Ag4 bureau, for instance, outlines to its potential customers their system of media façade as a) interactive, b) autoactive, and c) reactive, all three qualities designating the manageability of projected contents in relation to the changing environmental conditions (see Figure 7). ‘Interactivity’ signposts the possibility to constantly update the imagery with news feeds and hence facilitate interaction with the passers-by in terms of immediacy, ‘autoactivity’ points to the possibility of automated image generation that reduces the need of live controllers, whilst ‘reactivity’ allows generating images that “mirror” the conditions in the surrounding area, such as weather or traffic conditions, recorded by sensors (ag4 2006: 20, 70, 108). In that sense, urban screens in form of responsive media façades are practically integrated in the plural surroundings by being highly responsive to their “contexts”. On the other hand, their seamless mediation can render them insufficiently distinguishable on the eye-level of the potential pedestrian audiences. In effect, the need to blend the screen with the immediate environment by the means of changing images, appears as self-defeating. Facing the risk of ca-

cophony that communication specialists would refer to as the “cocktail party problem”, that is, “the ability to listen to, and follow, one speaker in the presence of others” (Cherry 1957: 278), the designers must ensure that their display stands out from the environment as well. The designer's intent is, then, not only in establishing close relations with the surrounding environment, as Offenhuber suggests (2008), but, at the same time, in making the screens as objects distinguishable and their visual operations evident. Thus just as the moving image panel becomes a strategic material in designing the façade, the contextual urban flux remains its principal environment. The imagery, as it were, is not inserted merely in a building's surface but in the local environment of which it forms part. The moving images fuse with the exchange of a series of movement and stasis in the street traffic. But in order to achieve that, the displays, as I suggested, must mark their presence in their own distinct *modus operandi*, by which they occupy a location in urban scenographies, as well as a place in individual sensory microenvironments.⁹ Thus ranging from the macro scale of the heterogeneous contexts to the micro scale of individual urban screens requires a consideration of their possible communicational *modus operandi*.

In response to McCarthy's (2001) call to explore what the screens ‘do’ to invite attention of the moving subjects, we could try to locate urban screens in the “cultural circuit” (cf. du Gay *et al.* 1997) of “producers, consumers and the communicative forms”. Thereby “broadcasting” is commonly considered “an *institutionalised* feature of cultural consumption” (Moore 2000: 12, my emphasis; cf. Ang 1996: 21-26). The sheer circumstantiality of communication in the city space, constituted by a multiplicity of actors and forms, resonates with the standard of the cultural circuit only remotely. McCarthy instructs us to explore “the physical position [that the screen] occupies within a space”, because it suggests “the spectator positions” that the ones found “within eye- and earshot of a particular screen ... are encouraged to occupy” (2001: 118, 119). But how to relate broadcasting in terms of consumption, which counts on intentional usage with transience that essentially characterises individual encounters with screens in series of hardly avoidable distractions coming from, say, other people's mobile phone conversations, other printed posters, traffic, etc.? For the same reasons, it would be, on the other hand, incorrect to identify the screens merely as part of “infrastructural requirements” of the street, such as electricity, water and gas supply, whereby “the kinds of behaviour expected of inhabitants or users of a premises on the street” are standardly pre-calculated in bureaucratic procedures (Fuller 2005: 90). Preliminarily, I suggest following Fuller's idea that “all objects have a poetics” in that “they make the world and take part in it” (*ibid.* 2). Fuller underlies that “objects [of media ecologies] have explicitly become informational as much as physical but without losing any of their fundamental materiality” (*ibid.* 2). Let us take this idea further and recognise that whilst occupying physical space in urban infrastructures, urban screens shed light onto environment and invest the immediate

surroundings with meanings that are best understood through the anthropology of illumination. The artificial light is thus best seen as urban screens' spatial force *sine qua non*, by which their producers make additional territorial claims of public space. Such concoction of materiality and virtuality is the next exploratory premise, to which I shall now turn more closely.

Displaying Illumination

When almost four decades ago American architects Venturi *et al.* set off to explore the symbolic architectures of Las Vegas, they faced the problem of mapping the intensely mediated territories faithfully. The old architectural representation techniques in relation to the mediated space of Las Vegas suddenly appeared "static where it is dynamic, contained where it is open, two-dimensional where it is three-dimensional. ... Architectural techniques are suitable for large, broad objects in space, like buildings, but not for thin, intense objects, like signs" (1977: 75-76). What the researchers required was a way of charting "intensity", a category that appeared to them so strongly relevant that they suggested introducing "twin phenomena", with "archetypal ... rather than specific buildings" (*ibid.*). My usage of the term 'urban screens' as a generic designation for the display media in the city similarly privileges recognising patterns in the sea of variability. However, the dimension of space of mediated communication is in Venturi *et al.*'s account unfairly dismissed. Signs flood the space of Las Vegas, which means that "communication dominates space", but for Venturi *et al.* this means that such architecture is "*antispacial*" (*ibid.* 8, my emphasis). I would rather, conversely, assume that all architecture *is spacial*, but in a double sense: in terms of space that the signs acquire physically, as built instalments, and space they occupy visually, as a consequence of their luminous 'spillage' on the environment. In this way, we can chart what I would tentatively term *screen territories*, by tracing the light from the screen-source to the surface of reflection.

From the Platonic standpoint that "nothing is self-evident, including truth", light which fundamentally "is only visible when reflected by objects", has been regarded in many parts of the world as a metaphor of "transcendence, the good, truth, and power" (Hillis 1999: 34; cf. Smith 2003: 121). Since "it is not of the matter it reveals ... like space, light articulates relations between this and that, here and there" (*ibid.*, original emphasis). By tracing in our exploration of urban screens not *lux*, "our psychological experience of light", but *lumen*, the "radiance passing through and illuminating space" (*ibid.* 36), we can study spatial relationships, which in their immaterial nature enclose much of the otherwise inaccessible power dynamics. Consider the following.

The shining reflection on the silver iron panel that dominates the right half of the photograph (Fig. 1) cannot be giving trace of the daylight coming from the exit seen on the left half, because it is, obviously, located on the opposite side of the source of the outer sunlight.



Fig. 2: Perspectives 1

Two distinct sources of light add up to the visibility of the entire space of the London Underground foyer, covering its corners with light. The source of the phantom light is a set of advertisement screens (Fig. 3 and 4) placed opposite the silver board, emanating their messages with such excessive light that the board on the opposite becomes itself a reflector screen.



Fig.3: Perspectives 2



Fig.4: Perspectives 3

Thus before they 'inform' or 'advertise' – urban screens 'glow', shedding light on the surrounding built surfaces, by consequence of being electronically 'fuelled'. I suggest that the proliferation of urban screens can then be explored within broader developments in *the management of space by the means of light*.¹⁰

As Bouman reminds us, "in the past, architecture also needed sunlight in order to be seen. As soon as darkness fell it ... vanished, cloaked in shadows" (1998a: 63). Pawley takes the case of gothic church stained windows in a more rigorous examination to suggest that the structures of the walls of the churches were built in order to support the tall wide coloured windows (1990: 115).¹¹ "Windows ceased to be simple penetrations designed to admit light, but became instead complex translucent coloured-image screens built from mosaics of stained glass" (ibid. 115).

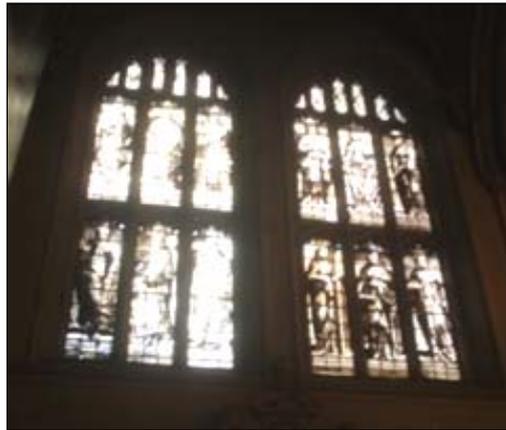


Fig. 5: Gothic church window

In that way, the Bible had been, as Pawley suggests, narrativised, and the churches served as “public information buildings” of their own (ibid. 119), long before the contemporary displays have been heralded for their historic innovations or critiqued for their polluting effects on public space.

Different contexts and times offer different ways to think of the same kind of practice; once it was solely the management of natural, and later, in addition, of artificial light. As Tanizaki documents in his classic critique of the competing usage of artificial and natural light in post-war Japan, ancient Japanese nobility and religious authorities used to cover the entry surfaces of the buildings and the statues of Buddha with gold. The material was chosen “not [for] mere extravagance”, but for its spectacular reflective, screening effects (2001: 36). In such cases “the gold leaf of a sliding door or screen will pick up a distant glimmer from the garden ... [and] light the darkness of the room” (ibid. 35-36).¹² In another case, deliberately chosen as very different, the journal *Building Services* publishes in 1979 a set of recommendations for “Working With the Small Screen”. Alleging that there are “special needs [that should be acknowledged] where small screens are introduced into existing premises”, the article takes up the idea of light as the key currency in negotiating work space’s “comfort and efficiency” (Wood-Robinson 1979: 45). Considering the brightness of display screens in work places as opposed to the reflective surfaces of surrounding walls, the daylight coming through the windows and even the reflective clothing of the workers, the workplace becomes a sort of a light battleground. The article recommended that, for instance, screens and windows should not be facing each other and the displayed figures on the screens should be given a dark background (ibid.). These apparently minute characteristics – as such easily overseen in current debates – say much about the potentially high relevance of detail in understanding proportionally larger structures. In my case, the management of reflective surfaces gains important consistency in discussing light as the key *matter* in negotiating of visibility. Re-

turning to the question of the display screens in the city, the attention is on *what amounts to the visibility of a street, a square, or a passage.*

By extracting for this purpose not the piece of display technology or its textual message, but the sub-textual medium of light that carries the projected text, we are able to attend the broader forces of signification that penetrate space on three-dimensional, rather than two-dimensional plane of pure textual messages. Since the urban screens encroach upon space both physically and visually, what can we learn about their operations by tracing the side-effect of spilt light? Further enquiries could ask which surfaces deliver light, which accidentally reflect it (and along the way fortify original source, especially in the case of advertiser's rental of physical space solely to put up the screen), and which remain darkened, thus hidden (cf. Fig. 6). Before the advent of artificial light, the screening surfaces were used to reflect and point the light in desired direction, whereas with the electronic technologies the light is launched in environment, and is, in that respect more easily manageable as force.



Fig. 6: Urban Visibilities

Artificial light has been used to convey spatial relationships since the early practices electric lights as “light-based media” from the late 19th century onwards (Schivelbusch 1995: 220) played with “three-dimensional effects in the game of light and shadow” (Thomsen 1996a: 104-105; Ackerman 2006). With the grand demonstrations at World Fairs, electric light gained the strength of a new medium of expression, utilised across architectural avant-gardist projects, artistic experiments by the futurists, vorticists and expressionists, as well as commercial and urban practices, enhancing such forms as “floodlights”, “outline lighting”, “kinetic light”, “light houses”, etc. (Ackerman 2006: 12-13; cf. Ackermann and Neumann 2006). The messages of commercial entrepreneurs intertwined with the otherwise noisy space of the cities since the earliest stages in modern urban development. Soon after the new electric lighting technology was introduced, “in the marketplace, the electric sign, the spotlight and even the streetlight became economic weapons” (Nye 1994: 175; cf. McQuire 2005). With the increasing usage of electric light and experimentation with its suggestive power,

What emerge[d] in the electropolis ... was a hybrid environment belonging to neither architecture nor sculpture as traditionally understood. Instead, the electric city [was] ... characterized by the interpenetration of material and immaterial spatial regimes (McQuire 2008: 122).

More contemporary cases continue on that tradition in pop culture and, say, live concerts, whereby “light defines, cuts out, creates spaces with immaterial walls” (Thomsen 1996b: 115). However, all these occasions for urban visual spectacles appear to be resting on a much older principle that counts on a particular degree of bodily proximity with a display panel. The involvement with the urban displays assumes incidental attention, and necessitates, paradoxically, securing enough distance between the passing viewer and the viewed object.

Proximity with Distance

As Gitlin alleges, a display screen “delivers light, gleams with availability” regardless of its changing situational contexts. “Unless we click an off button or smash the screen, the images stream on, ... They collect our attention but do not reciprocate” (2001: 20-21). Gitlin’s Kafkaesque observation, should it succeed in disguising the seamless image-ubiquity of the mediated urban space, bypasses its fundamental operational currency – space. The “stream” and “attention” occur *in* and *take space*, and however blind and deaf, the communicators in Gitlin’s story *are related*. In the context of mediated urban space, their relation is necessarily spatial. Therein, critical proximity collides with necessary distance. This is the third exploratory premise I want to consider here.

With the rise of modernist relativity of individual time-space senses that are intrinsically “dependent upon the observer’s frame of reference”, as McQuire reminds us, “spacing ... always implies relation” (ibid. 21, 22; cf. MacPhee 2002). Arbitrary spatial relations are always implied in design, yet again variously enacted by its users on the ground. Even more recently, “the “medialization” of a façade” is said to allow buildings to ‘move’ and facilitate “an emotional connection between the audience and the architecture” (multimediafaçade.com 2008). German “mediatecture” company “ag4” advertises, as they claim, their own invention of “transparent media façade” (Müller 2006: 4), based on the *LED* system that orchestrates miniature bulbs on a steel net stretched across the outer skin of a building. The innovation, they explain, was a commercial response to “a rising demand for the number of projects requiring façades to act as communication interfaces” (ibid. 4). Essentially, the constructors rely on the power of scale and the potential of changeability inherent in moving images in facilitating the attention of the passers-by (see Figure 7).

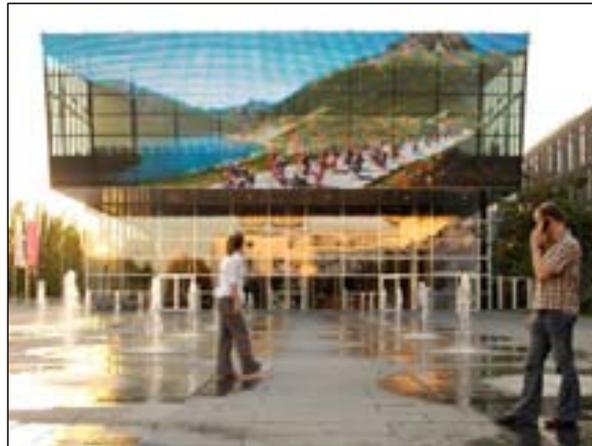


Figure 7: Media Façade

(Source: http://www.medienfassade.com/bespielung_autoaktiv.html?&L=1)

The “media façades” are advertised as exceptionally effective in incorporating moving images into the skin of the building in relation to the traditionally narrativised video clips (Kronhagel 2006: 166). The company explains that the continuous flow of images “is not limited in time by a beginning and an end but recreates a new [sic] each and every second” (ag4 2006: 108). In addition, the media façade does not employ a black frame to separate the projected images from the surroundings. This all gives us reason to think of the virtual and the physical domains of built space as constituent parts of urban space.¹³ In turn, moving images on a large scale complement the heterogeneous rhythms in public terrain. The passing pedestrians and vehicles interchange. Although the images move as well, their source, the building, remains static.

If we attempt to understand what enables a façade to be perceived as a display screen and how that may be helpful in understanding the broader media-saturated world, we must isolate, once again, the “contextual” features and focus on the screen’s visual operation. The media façade is constructed upon the *LED* technology and consists of an iron net of tiny bulbs, which blink in various colours (fig. 8). When looked at from a certain distance, the pre-programmed system of lighting gives the illusion of moving images (fig. 9).



Figure 8: LED net

(Source: http://www.medienfassade.com/uploads/pics/mediamesh_vorteile_02.jpg)



Figure 9: LED Image
(Source: <http://www.multimediafacade.com>)

What is easily overlooked (particularly in much of the determinist appraisals of the new projection technologies that allegedly make the buildings ‘move’) is that the logic of communication seems to be based on a much older principle. An example can be found in medieval stone art. Particular assemblages of small pieces of coloured stones constructed images. A view from a distance made the fragmented nature of the lines and shapes seem less obvious (fig.10).



Figure 10: Roman Girl (Gaea) mosaic
(Source: http://www-tc.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/zeugma/images/mosa_gypsygirl.jpg)

Could it be said that the contemporary media façades operate in a similar logic? The mode is different: the stones are exchanged for bulbs. The pieces of mosaic are, as it were, electrified, and thus, made visually manageable. But in both cases there is an assemblage of small pieces of visual text that create the impression of an image when ‘read’ from sufficient distance. This confirms the famous Bolter and Grusin’s (2000) “remediations” theorem, whereby the enhancement of immediacy, that is, of the illusion of unapparent mediation, motivates particular improvements of media technologies. In our case the early electric floodlights matured to the more recent electronic display panels (notwithstanding the contemporary co-existence of both forms).

There is yet another kind of perceptual manipulation resting on the play of distancing that allows the electric light source to be not merely *visible* but *viewable*. If we zoom into the very appearance of the display, we can notice that what distinguishes the billboard displays on Figure 11 is clearly an absence of cover that works as a separation of the backstage 'raw' light and the front stage visual spectacle.

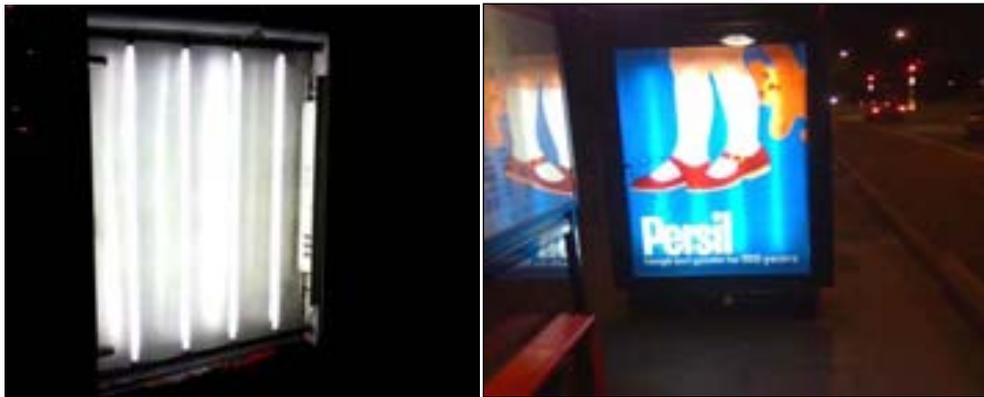


Figure. 11: Raw Light and Covered Light

This takes us, if only briefly, back to the history of the industrialisation of electric light. It is because, as Schivelbusch alleges, “the technical qualities of gas lighting and its impact on perceptions can be summed up in a single word: distance” (Schivelbusch 1995: 44). What was a problem of light insufficiency before gas was introduced became an excess of light when the open gas flames and electric lights lit up the spaces. The flames were so strong that they had to be covered, but in a way that the intensity of light was maintained. In turn, lampshades were invented, starting a new era in light perception. “From [then] on, it was not the flame that glowed, but the lamp shade, which allowed an amorphous, diffuse light to filter through” (ibid. 44). Mere light gained the meaning of “raw material that had to be refined by the lampshade before it could be admitted into the drawing-room” (ibid. 174). As the light surface took the role of the light source, the perceptions of light changed as well and the light was seen as more close, even and tender (ibid. 174, 54, 181). The sense of space changed accordingly. Because the bright electric light was perceived as so strong that it allowed no shadows in the rooms in which it was turned on, “a whole new culture ... developed, based on indirect, reflected and focused light” (ibid. 180). “The monotony of electric light” needed animation through irregular shapes and various colours of glass (ibid. 182). As the “the uninterrupted, transparently sparkling surface” of glass was made technically available, the mirroring effects of glass and reflectors were exploited extensively in shop windows to attract the curious eyes of the passers-by (ibid. 146). The shop owners were perfecting the system all until there was enough light so that “the source of light itself [could] disappear from the view” (ibid. 148). Even daylight at once seemed “aggressive” and too direct, which, in

turn, gave rise to “a renaissance of medieval glass painting” on home windows (ibid. 182-183). in the case of urban mediations, one other contemporary example suggests that the premise distance-and-cover has to be thought in a wide range of options, including the converse: minimising distance.

At a highly frequented site, the end point of the promenade, unlike in any other Mediterranean town with a strong evening stroll culture, the city council inserted the 22-meter wide moving image screen (fig. 12), as the then mayor told me, in order to foster socialisation and rehabilitate the long neglected site. The screen consists of 300 glass plates under which the LED lighting system works with the integrated converters of the sun's energy. A rather abstract (discothèque-like) play of lines and shapes invites the visitors to walk, jump, dance, or simply stand gazing closely at the innumerable patterns of moving colours.



Figure 12: Greeting to the Sun installation (Zadar, Croatia)

Contrary to the afore-mentioned cases of urban screens, this surface is designed to suggest immersion, which is possible only by minimal distance and in the activity of walking over or lying on the images. This is, more generally, supported by where the screen is located. It covers the surface of the dock, which the constructor literally added by widening the previously much narrower quay, in order to incorporate the screen. In that sense, the installation is a *screen-place*, where all the other elements (such as the signs for the surveillance cameras, the benches for sitting) underline the fact of the screen's presence, rather than *screen-object* normally found in a busy urban place, alongside many other elements that would compete for attention.

As I sought to illustrate, the designers of the display billboards in the city draw on the ancient principle of the separation of the lit surface and the light source as well as distance from the onlookers to achieve the suggestive appeal of their images. I would tentatively call it a front-back display paradox: in order to be perceivable, the textual display must be joined with an electric support, but in order to be readable the electric manufacture of the display must be covered and distanced. Future research can mobilise this premise by investigating how the subtle

positioning and design strategies suggest seamless mediation that works towards achieving the designer's communicative goals. In Zadar, the intention of the designer was to foster playful engagements with the screen, by working with distance on large scale. To wrap up, urban screens operate as individual sources of 'raw' light and 'textual' spectacles alike. Theirs is a sensational appearance immanent to the specific technological incorporation in the urban fabric.

Concluding Remarks

The growing presence of urban screens in world cities calls for closer inspection of the outdoor display media, especially in the context of their progressive changes in forms and usages. In response to a lack of scholarly engagement with urban screens, this article drew together the different texts in media and cultural studies to offer some recommendations for further explorations. Seeking the ways beyond the dominant assertions that media are now everywhere, and that media and city are inherently representative of each other's communicative forces, I suggested a spatially informed epistemology sensitive to the ground details and overarching logics of structural conditions in which the urban screens operate, such as singularity and plurality of technologies and contexts, and the management of visibilities and distances. Practically, I suggested scrutinising the relations between distance, scale and size amongst the objects that compose the research site; the relations between the spatial claims of display media as material objects and illuminative forces; and the relations between passers-by, screens, and environments, that is, the observable ways in which the bodily movements relate with the built structures.

The three exploratory premises I suggested mutually overlap and should ideally be mobilised intertwiningly. This is even more important if the urban screenings are to be explored three-dimensionally, that is, not merely as texts being projected before us, but as moments of polymorphous spatial compositions registered from above, on the side, and right in front. Although the changeable appearances might present urban screens as sporadic immaterial discontinuities in the built assemblages (cf. Struppek 2006), from the vantage point of a spatially informed epistemology, the urban screens are better seen as physical occupants of space that exhibit changing representations of various 'elsewheres'. As the screens continue to develop, and their producers continue to surprise us with new inventive forms and images, the exploratory premises I suggested should not be taken as final routes, but as options to be further considered in future research. To return to the beginning of the paper, "in our age of technological saturation, response to place becomes the most practical adaptation strategy of all" (McCullough 2004: 213). If the sole idea of an unprecedented saturation in making sense of the contemporary media environments in urban space cannot suffice, the (re)mediated city is better understood as a domain of perpetual continuity and change. Screens communicate

to passers-by, regardless of their immediate sensorial preferences. Images of ‘*virtual*’ places shine from metal surfaces designed with a strong sense of the ‘*real*’ place that homes them. In a study of urban screens, we are after what is in between.

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Please note that all illustrations are the authors unless otherwise stated.

Notes

- 1 I simplify this otherwise much more complicated architectural distinction for the purpose of illustrating the argument. See, for instance, Venturi *et al.* (1977) for a fascinating discussion about symbolism inherent in the forms of the modernist architectural programme.
- 2 Myriad public art projects make use of visual display media to interrogate the mediated quotidian, most notably in the works of Nam June Paik, Jenny Holzer, Krzysztof Vodiczko, and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.
- 3 See, in that respect, Raynsford’s (1996) study about the construction of New York’s Grand Terminal on the turn of the centuries as a reinforcement of a long standing rationalist desire to orchestrate the fluctuation of individual passengers as crowds ‘manageable’ by “mechanised rationality”.
- 4 Compare with Morley and Silverstone (1992: 201).
- 5 See also McCarthy (2001: 119-121), Bouman (1998a: 55), and Bullivant (2002).
- 6 See Introna and Ilharco (2006) for a specialised phenomenological perspective on the essences of ‘screenness’ that, in the Heideggerian tradition, orient one towards display panels as “something that calls for or grabs our attention” (2006: 64) in a pre-existing ‘referential whole’. My preference of the luminous rather than textual activity of the screens is in agreement with this view of a “grounding intentional orientation” of screens, which might be said to signpost their “ontological significance beyond the mere content of their surfaces” (*ibid.* 58, 70).
- 7 See Vandenberghe (2007) for a broader consideration of Debray’s complicated ethos.
- 8 This viewpoint shares much with Silverstone’s classic postulate of the double logic of home television, whereby “the consumption of both, the technology and its content, define the significance of television as an object of consumption” (1994: 123).

- 9 I borrow this notion from A. Williams's spatial currency of "the smallest spatial field[s] of human interactions and performances" (1980: 76-77, cf. *ibid.* 237).
- 10 Compare with Bille and Sørensen (2007).
- 11 I am grateful to prof. Bernard Sharratt for consultancy about this aspect.
- 12 In Tanizaki's account should by no means be mistaken for an appraisal of visibility; in his critique the "hidden magic" of shadows is positioned against the "the evils of excessive illumination" that obliterate the particular beauty of a "'visible darkness', where always something seemed to be flickering or shimmering" (*ibid.* 46, 53, 55, original emphasis).
- 13 See Parkes and Ängeslevä (2007) for an account which views LED urban screens as "a hole in space" with "dismembodied" material. The authors experiment with "breaking the frame (of the standard screen) with seamless content" of "embedded" screens that, for instance, form part of coloured windows with "thermochromic pigment" technology.

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Disposable and Usable Pasts in Central European Cities

By Agata Lisiak

Abstract

In Central European cities memories and material histories of socialist regimes remain particularly difficult to address and incorporate into the new democratic present. After 1989, city authorities in the region have chosen to emphasize some pasts and neglect others and, thus, (re)write their own versions of (urban) history and (re)shape their (urban) identities. In my paper I inquire into how post-1989 Central European urbanities are shaped by and communicated through various designations including signs and symbols on city streets, monuments, and buildings. Predictably, many material remnants of the socialist regimes have been destroyed or hidden from the public eye – my interest lies not only in which various designations on buildings and which monuments had to go, but also in why and how they disappeared. I discuss the most popular methods of hiding and/or effacing the remnants of socialism that range from subtle (surrounding of communist landmarks with tall buildings) through the obvious (renaming of streets, squares, metro stations; giving old communist buildings new names and functions) to the irreversible and, thus, most controversial (the razing of socialist architecture and monuments). The disappearance of the material capital of the socialist past has been accompanied by intense commemoration practices verging on memorial obsessions. New monuments, plaques, street names, and museums appeared almost as quickly as the old “disposable” ones were forced out from the urban landscape. The complexity of an urban identity as communicated through city streets, monuments, and buildings not only invites, but necessitates an interdisciplinary approach and, thus, my analysis includes elements from such diverse areas of knowledge as aesthetics, architecture, communication studies, comparative cultural studies, economics, history, and political science.

Keywords: Central Europe, Berlin, Warsaw, post-communism, cultural memory, urbanism

Disposable and Usable Pasts in Central European Cities

Although today's urbanities of European metropolises have been shaped by centuries if not millennia of turbulent histories, the recent pasts invariably arouse most public interest and controversy. In Central European cities in general and in Berlin and Warsaw in particular memories and material remnants of the communist/socialist regimes remain difficult to address and incorporate into the new democratic present. After 1989, the city authorities of Berlin and Warsaw have chosen to emphasize some pasts and neglect others and, thus, (re)write their own versions of urban histories. Importantly, as capital cities, Berlin and Warsaw represent not only their local heritage, but also that of whole nations; therefore, their identities are of crucial importance to the country's image and, as such, especially valuable. In what follows I look into which elements of the cities' recent pasts have been remembered and which have been forgotten. In the growing absence of the traces of the socialist past, the focus had to be shifted to other historical periods. The collapse of the communist regimes put an end to decades of silencing and/or misrepresenting uncomfortable pasts, especially the Second World War and the Holocaust, ethnic cleansings and expulsions, and people's revolutions repressed by Soviet and/or Soviet-imposed authorities. Consequently, after 1989, Central European capitals have witnessed an emergence of countless monuments, plaques, and museums, whereby, remarkably, the object of commemoration differs depending on which political party happens to rule the city and/or the country at a given moment. The complexity of an urban identity as communicated through city streets, monuments, and buildings not only invites, but necessitates an interdisciplinary approach (see Barthes 1967): the below analysis includes elements from such areas of knowledge as aesthetics, architecture, communication studies, comparative cultural studies, history, and political science.

Destruction of the Socialist Past – Impossible, Prevented, and/or Encouraged

The material remnants of the previous system that vanished in the first years after the 1989 revolutions were destroyed or changed for a number of reasons. First, many residents of (East) Berlin and Warsaw were simply embarrassed by omnipresent red stars, communist memorials, and statues of Soviet revolutionaries and supported their destruction (see Velinger 2005). Second, some of the communist symbols were of very poor artistic quality and, as such, generally (although until 1989 secretly) criticized for their grey concrete drabness; still, it is only realistic to assume that the new municipal and state elites used the aesthetic argument as one of the possible excuses to rid of the inconvenient symbols of the most recent past. Third, as Andreas Huyssen argues, the post-1989 treatment of the socialist herit-

age was “a pure strategy of power and humiliation, a final burst of Cold War ideology, pursued via a politics of signs, much of it wholly unnecessary” (Huysen 2003: 54). Huysen's explanation supports my claim that Central European capitals are (post)colonial cities. According to the definition I develop elsewhere, Berlin and Warsaw are (post)colonial cities because their politics, cultures, societies, and economies have been shaped by two centers of power: the Soviet Union as the former colonizer, whose influence remains visible predominantly in architecture, infrastructure, social relations, and mentalities, and the Western culture and the Western and/or global capital as the current colonizer, whose impact extends over virtually all spheres of urban life. Consequently, both cities are characterized by political, cultural, social, and economic tensions resulting from the condition of being postcolonial and colonial at the same time.

Despite the relative freedom with which new democratic authorities removed the remnants of the previous regime from the view, much of the socialist architecture proved impossible to destroy for practical and cultural reasons. The prefabricated apartment buildings in the outer city districts had been losing on popularity already in the 1980s – especially in Warsaw, where increasingly more people were allowed to build family houses in the suburbs (Murawski 2007: 94 – unless otherwise indicated all translations from Polish and German into English are mine) – and in the 1990s experienced an exodus of their residents followed by a ghettoization of whole neighborhoods. Despite the declining living conditions, however, razing prefabricated tenements has never been a serious option because of the tremendous economic and social costs such enterprise would entail. Similarly, prefabricated office and hotel buildings in downtown areas have been renovated rather than demolished and, thus, continue to exist in the urban landscape as reminders of the communist system. Moreover, some architectonic objects of the gone era have been embraced by post-1989 popular culture, aesthetically rehabilitated, and reevaluated as “cool”. In Berlin, for example, many newcomers from West Germany found East German architecture exciting and exotic; consequently, the GDR became the new German pop (Cammann 2003: 285-86).

When it comes to socialist statues and memorials, a few survived either because they were overlooked in the general frenzy of the transition period or – which was especially true of Berlin – because community protest groups and activists prevented their demolition (Huysen 2003: 54). Post-war Soviet memorials in Berlin, such as those in Treptower Park and Tiergarten, are special case as their preservation and maintenance were secured during the international negotiations preceding Germany's reunification (see Ladd 1997: 194). Nevertheless, most communist monuments in Berlin and Warsaw were destroyed primarily because the new political authorities viewed socialist monuments in strictly ideological terms and (dis)regarded them as propaganda tools of the previous regime (see Benning 1998). The prompt destruction of the monuments commemorating feared Soviet leaders produced various responses: while Warsaw residents generally welcomed

the disappearance of the reminders of Kremlin's influence, in Berlin some struggled to preserve socialist monuments as part of the urban environment. The removal of Dzerzhinsky's statue in Warsaw in November 1989 was enthusiastically greeted by the gathered crowd and the photographs documenting the event are among the most popular images to symbolize the fall of the largely unwanted regime. The demolition of the Lenin monument in Berlin in 1989 "was certainly the best-publicized case of post-revolution iconoclasm. This highly-symbolic event is remembered to this day in the city's collective memory and was alluded to, for example, in the final sequence of the feature film *Good-Bye, Lenin!*" (Sigel 2008: no pagination). Unlike in the case of the Dzerzynski statue, however, the Lenin monument in Berlin-Friedrichshain found supporters among local residents, politicians, and artists. The promptly established community initiative "Lenindenkmal" protested for weeks against the razing of the monument, but only managed to postpone it for a few days (see Strauss 2001). Where the Lenin monument used to stand, today there is an assembly of fourteen large rocks and fountains – an intentionally neutral *ersatz* that continues to be seen as alien by those who can still remember the previous look of the square (see Strauss 2001).

Next to the removal of communist monuments, changing of street names was a particularly widespread method of urban memory engineering in and right after 1989, possibly because it was relatively easy to execute and allowed for immediate substitutes. The street renaming in (East) Berlin may be seen as a (post)colonial practice since the new street names were "imposed" by West German politicians (Huysen 2003: 54). Huysen is convinced that much of the "often petty" street renaming was "wholly unnecessary" and only intensified the "political fallout in an East German population that felt increasingly deprived of its life history and of its memories of four decades of separate development" (Huysen 2003: 54). While the German capital witnessed protests against some of the changes imposed on the former East Berlin city text (Jordan 2006: 54), the residents of Warsaw seemed – at least in the first years of the transformation – rather content with what they perceived as liberating anti-Soviet developments. Generally, the choice of new street names in the Central European capitals was influenced by what political parties were in power in local and state governments at the time and the renaming process was often chaotic and lacked a bigger plan. In Berlin, many streets were given back their "presocialist" names, some of which were "decidedly antisocialist" (Huysen 2003: 54), while others received neutral city names: e.g., *Leninallee* became *Landsberger Allee*, *Dimitroffstrasse* became *Danziger Strasse*, and, similarly, the subway station *Dimitroffstrasse* was named *Eberswalder Strasse*¹ (see Umbenennungen Berliner Straßen, Plätze, Bahnhöfe 1995-). Warsaw's city text experienced a return to the interwar period and to more recent pasts that had no chance of being commemorated under the socialist regime. Consequently, *ulica Marcelego Nowotki* was renamed *ulica Generała Władysława Andersa*, *aleja Karola Świerczewskiego* became *aleja "Solidarności"*

(“Solidarity” Avenue),² and the avenue devoted to the October Revolution (*aleja Rewolucji Październikowej*) received a new patron, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński also known as the Primate of the Millennium (*aleja Prymasa Tysiąclecia*).

Berlin and Warsaw as Urban Palimpsests

Keeping the above in mind, Berlin and Warsaw may be described as urban palimpsests, i.e. metropolises whose city-texts have been constantly reimagined and rewritten and where the same buildings or squares play diametrically different roles under various political regimes. As the examples below demonstrate, historical irony became particularly widespread in Central Europe after 1989. In 1991, the building where the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (PZPR or Polish United Workers' Party) once had its headquarters was transformed into the seat of the newly established Warsaw Stock Exchange. Despite the decidedly non (or even anti) communist character of its post-1989 function, many (especially older) residents of Warsaw keep calling the building by its former name, i.e. *Dom Partii* (House of the Party) or *Biały Dom* (White House). Since 2000, when the stock exchange relocated to the newly constructed *Centrum Giełdowe* (Stock Exchange Center) at 4 Książęca Street, the 1952 building has been hosting offices of financial and banking companies.

Quite another trend in the treatment of the past has been the museumization of important socialist buildings. The headquarters of the Ministry of State Security in Berlin-Lichtenberg were turned into the Stasi Museum as early as 1990, soon after the building had been stormed by crowds seeking information and justice. Among other rooms, visitors have access to the offices of Erich Mielke, GDR's last Minister of State Security. Also the former Stasi prison in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen was preserved as a historical document and transformed into a memorial in 1994: “since the vast majority of the buildings, equipment and furniture and fittings have survived intact, the Memorial provides a very authentic picture of prison conditions in the GDR” (Stiftung Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen 2008: no pagination). Preserving the prison and opening it to the public not only makes it possible to learn about recent history in the place where it actually happened, but also commemorates the victims of the GDR regime and, as such, renders Berlin-Hohenschönhausen valuable both as a museum and as a memorial.

Although obsessed with monuments (Huysen 2003: 31), Berlin has also shown pragmatism in relation to its history: some of the buildings constructed under and for the Nazi regime were used during the GDR and then recycled again by reunited Germany. The most prominent example is the 1936 building of the former Reich Air Ministry at 97 Wilhelmstrasse, which – having suffered only little damage during the bombings of Berlin – was used immediately after the war as the headquarters of the Soviet military administration and served several functions under the GDR regime: first as the seat of the *Volkskammer* (People's Chamber),

where the GDR constitution was signed in 1949, then as the *Haus der Ministerien* (House of Ministries). On June 16, 1953, crowds of East Berlin workers gathered in front of the building and demanded economic reforms: their protests escalated to a brutally repressed revolution and ignited mass emigration from the GDR. In 1990, the *Treuhand* privatization agency moved in and in 1992 the building was renamed *Detlev-Rohwedder-Haus* after the former *Treuhand* director murdered by RAF terrorists in 1991. Ten years after the Fall of the Wall, the former House of Ministries became the seat of the Federal Ministry of Finance (Bundesministerium der Finanzen 2005). Similarly, the *Haus am Werderschen Markt*, built in 1935 as an extension of the *Reichsbank* and home to the Central Committee of the SED party in the GDR, was transformed into the Federal Foreign Office in 1995.

Removal of the Berlin Wall and its Consequences

Karen E. Till argues that East Berlin buildings “were quickly closed or renovated because they were perceived as a threat to the legitimacy of a new Germany. ... These sites were understood by Western officials as places of GDR memory that promoted Eastern values, pride, and truths” (Till 2001: 273). Although Till is right to observe that the treatment of socialist buildings in reunited Berlin has had a remarkably colonial character, it is important to differentiate between various intensities of those practices: assigning new functions and names to old buildings seems mild – if, at times, paradoxical or ironic – when compared to the more dramatic razing practices. The most obvious example of destroying the remnants of the previous regime is the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. International media reports turned the Fall of the Wall into a collective experience: the videos and pictures that traveled across the world showed cheering crowds tearing down the concrete slabs with whatever sharp objects they could lay their hands on. Despite the ensuing impression that the Wall was spontaneously dismantled by the city residents, the actual destruction of all border installations around West Berlin took two years and several political decisions to complete; the official dismantling works did not even start until June 1990. Right after the collapse of the socialist regime, the destruction of the Wall seemed the most natural thing to do not only because the concrete structure symbolized the Cold War and Germany's postwar division, but also because keeping it in the reunited city would be simply impractical. Only few observers argued in favor of keeping part of the border installations in place for the sake of future generations (Klausmeier und Schmidt 2005: 11).

Today, the Berlin municipality, city visitors, and some residents seem to regret the thoroughness with which the Wall was torn down – even if, presumably, for different reasons (Klausmeier and Schmidt 2005:11). Searching for the remnants of the Wall has become an urban obsession, a quest for contemporary historians, and a highlight of thematic guided tours. It turns out that despite the seemingly

minute destruction of the border installations, hundreds of remnants can be still found in Berlin today, some kept on purpose, other simply forgotten: they range from solitary concrete slabs covered with graffiti through random watchtowers and lampposts to desolate and rusty distribution boxes (see Klausmeier und Schmidt 2005). Despite their remarkable quantity, the traces of the Wall remain mostly overlooked or undecipherable to a layman's eye. Surprisingly, it took the city authorities a decade to realize the necessity of commemorating the former division. Among dozens of memorials, a museum, artistic installations, and exhibitions, possibly the most important attempt to revive the memory of the Wall was the creation in 1999 of a twenty-kilometer long stretch of a double-row cobblestoned line built into the streets and sidewalks, where the inner city border used to run. The subtle yet clear outline serves as a tip not only to those Berlin visitors, who try to understand the topography of the former city division, but also to older generations of Berliners, who, among the constantly changing urban landscape, may not be able to remember, where the Wall used to stand. Immersed in streets, intersections, sidewalks, curbs, and bike paths, the line becomes part of the city body without posing any inconvenience for the residents.

Disappearance of Landmark Socialist Architecture

Whereas tearing down the Wall was generally applauded, the decision to demolish the *Palast der Republik* (Palace of the Republic) aroused controversy and resulted in protests, petitions, uncertainty, and, above all, chaos. The concrete and steel cube with an orange glass façade was open in 1976 as, primarily, the seat of the GDR parliament, but owing to its diverse functions quickly became one of the most popular buildings in East Berlin. The Palace of the Republic hosted a theater, concert halls, discotheques, restaurants, day care centers, stores, and a bowling alley and was visited by 15,000 people a day (see Bündnis für den Palast 2005), some even called it their second home (see Tangen 2006). Clearly, the political function of the Palace seemed secondary to its role as a meeting point and an entertainment center and the multifunctionality of the building emphasized its uniqueness: “perhaps nowhere else in the world did a parliament share quarters with a bowling alley” (Ladd 1997: 59). After the collapse of the communist regime, construction inspectors discovered that the building was contaminated with asbestos and ordered it closed. For years, the sealed Palace remained “in many eyes the symbolic legacy of a poisonous state” (Ladd 1997: 59), while others missed its socialist-day attractions. 1993 marked the beginning of a never-ending dispute between those advocating the preservation of the Palace as a natural and crucial element of Berlin's complex history and those in favor of its demolition and rebuilding of the Hohenzollern castle seriously damaged during the Second World War and then destroyed by the East German regime in 1950. In other words, “the empty GDR showpiece and the ghost of its baroque predecessor were

competing for the same site” (Ladd 1997: 59). Since both options found devoted followers and opponents, the heated discussion continued for over a dozen years. As if irrespective of the ongoing debate, between 1998 and 2003, the asbestos was removed at the great cost of DM 105 million (see Aldenhoven 2002) and in the summer of 2003 local architects, artists, and activists started using the Palace as a temporary art space (see Bündnis für den Palast 2005). Despite the popularity of the new cultural activities taking place in the decontaminated Palace, in November 2003 the Bundestag voted to tear the building down and – after taking into consideration protest statements and petitions issued by various non-government organizations, intellectuals, artists, urban planners, as well as some of the left wing and green parties – reconfirmed its decision in January 2006, after which demolition works commenced (see Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung 2008). For technical reasons, the Palace had to be deconstructed piece by piece rather than simply torn down – ironically, it has taken longer to destroy it than it took to build it.

Whereas the demolition of the Berlin Wall became an international historical and media event and the deconstruction of the Palace of the Republic triggered a decade-long nationwide debate involving politicians, architects, urban planners, activists, and artists, the destruction of valuable examples of socialist architecture in Warsaw took place among little to no media exposure. While large socialist edifices like the Palace of Culture and Science escaped razing, a number of small buildings such as cinemas and supermarkets were torn down despite protests of local communities, architects, and activists. Three of the destroyed movie theaters – *Kino Moskwa* (1948), *Kino Praha* (1948-49), and *Kino Skarpa* (1956-60) – were widely acknowledged relics of postwar architecture, rich in symbolism, and popular among the city residents (Pinkas and Kozak 2008). *Kino Moskwa* possessed a particularly iconic quality primarily because of the famous photograph showing a tank parked in front of the cinema in December 1981, right after the introduction of the martial law in Poland: the large neon sign on top of the building reads *Moskwa* (Moscow) while the billboard stretched above the pillared entrance advertises Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. In the 1990s, despite its good technical condition, *Kino Moskwa* proved less attractive to new investors than the plot it stood on and, consequently, in 1996 the building was razed and soon replaced by a Silver Screen multiplex cinema. Similarly, *Kino Praha* was torn down in 2005 to give way to a new movie theater *Nove Kino Praha* (see Pinkas and Kozak 2008). Where *Kino Skarpa* stood until early 2008, a luxurious condominium will be built (see Kozak 2008). Interestingly, the official reasons for demolishing Warsaw's postwar cinemas were purely economic, not ideological or aesthetic as was the case of many socialist buildings in Berlin. Since the futures of *Praha*, *Moskwa*, and *Skarpa* were decided solely by the free market, the protesters pointing at the cultural, historic, and architectonic values of the cinemas used argu-

ments irrelevant to the interested investors and, therefore, were doomed to fail in their attempts to save the buildings.

The Palace of Culture and Science Controversy

Whereas statues and small buildings could be demolished at a relatively low financial cost, the removal of larger structures such as prefabricated apartment houses and office buildings has been in most cases – with the notable exception of the Palace of the Republic in Berlin – considered too expensive to execute. Also, some early socialist and/or Stalinist buildings have been classified as cultural heritage and, thus, saved from demolition. While the *Zuckerbäckerstil* (“wedding cake style”) buildings on Karl-Marx-Allee in Berlin, previously the object of ridicule and/or embarrassment, have quite unanimously become part of the post-1989 German pop (Cammann 2003: 285), the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw continues to arouse controversy. Hardly any other building in Poland's capital has been producing such extreme responses and engaging the public in equally heated discussions involving decision makers and respected figures from the world of art and entertainment (see Wajda 2008). Razing the Palace of Culture and Science has never been a serious option; instead, there have been numerous attempts to hide it among other tall buildings and, thus, degrade from its role as a landmark and the most outstanding element of the Warsaw skyline. While the decision of the Warsaw authorities to hide the Palace of Culture and Science behind tall office buildings may be influenced by financial rather than ideological factors, some public figures have been advocating the removal of the Stalinist edifice for – what they considered – aesthetic and cultural reasons. One of the loudest voices in the debate belongs to film director Andrzej Wajda, who claims to be personally offended by the Palace's presence. In his open letter published in Poland's biggest daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Wajda mockingly calls the Palace “the temple of Joseph Stalin” and reminds warningly that “works of architecture are the most important symbol of what the sovereigns want to tell their subordinates” (Wajda 2008: no pagination). Wajda demands “more courage” and adds that the Palace “has to disappear among other high-rise buildings so that, surrounded by them, it is no longer a symbol of those gruesome times, but rather an example of the 1950s Soviet architecture astray on the Vistula” (Wajda 2008: no pagination). Crowded with skyscrapers, the new Warsaw skyline envisioned by the filmmaker would resemble Manhattan and not “the village of Warszawa with Joseph Stalin's church” (Wajda 2008: no pagination). Also minister of foreign affairs Radek Sikorski would like the Polish capital to look like New York City and suggests the Palace be razed and replaced with an enormous lawn with a pond in the middle and, a Warsaw version of Central Park (Sikorski qtd. in *Dziennik* May 9, 2008).

The desire to get rid of the Palace of Culture and Science has been motivated by two forces: the embarrassment at and, in turn, rejection of the Soviet-imposed

heritage on the one hand and the aspiration to transform Warsaw into a Western(-like) metropolis on the other hand. In his commentary to Wajda's letter, urban planner Krzysztof Nawratek dismisses the proposal to copy the forms existing in the United States as "infantile" and, as such, characteristic of the Polish elites who "not only accept the imitational capitalism of the periphery that is being created in Poland, but are simply numbed by their fascination for it" (Nawratek 2008: no pagination). The "in-between peripheral" position of Central European cities (see Tötösy e.g. 2002) and their (post)colonial nature are clearly acknowledged in Nawratek's critique, even if not exactly expressed in these specific words. Nawratek interprets Wajda's appeal as merely a shift of directions in the center-periphery relations from East to West: "We are no longer to follow the example of the Big Brother from Moscow, but that of the Bigger Brother from New York" (Nawratek 2008: no pagination).

The attempts to hide the Palace of Culture and Science among modern skyscrapers have been partly successful. Still, the landmark position of the Stalinist high-rise remains not only unshaken, but also increasingly popular, especially among foreign tourists who come to Warsaw in search of the city's communist past (see Kowalska 2007). Just like Berlin's TV tower, the Palace has become an important inspiration for designers: its outline has been reproduced on t-shirts, mugs, calendars, and other types of souvenirs and, therefore, has become an internationally known symbol of Warsaw. Interestingly, both the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw and the TV tower in Berlin are more popular among the city visitors and residents than among urban planners and decision makers. The new development plans for Alexanderplatz – the central square neighboring the TV tower – foresee a construction of several high-rise office buildings, similar to those towering over Potsdamer Platz. East Berlin architect Bruno Frierl criticizes the plans as "stupid and dangerous ... from the point of view of German unification ... *It's occupation and not unification*" (Frierl qtd. in Harris 2006: no pagination – emphasis mine). Hans Kollhoff, the (West) German architect responsible for the new development plan for Alexanderplatz, dismisses the above accusations on what he claims to be aesthetic grounds: "the TV tower can be respected as a DDR monument in East Berlin, but it cannot be respected by any means as a great piece of architecture" (Kollhoff qtd. in Harris 2006). Kollhoff's judgmental stance implies that one of the city's most important architects is uninterested in the cultural implications of his designs and remains oblivious to the impact the hiding of the TV tower may have on Berlin's urban identity.

Commemorating the Victims of the Socialist Regimes

The disappearance of the remnants of the socialist past has been accompanied by intense commemoration practices verging, especially in the 1990s, on memorial obsessions (Huysen 2003: 52). New monuments, plaques, street names, and mu-

seums appeared almost as quickly as the old “disposable” ones were forced out from the urban landscape. Berlin and Warsaw set on transforming their identities and chose new memory policies, among other tools, to achieve their goals. Despite local differences, it is possible to distinguish two main trends common to both cities. First, the most recent past has been commemorated only to a limited extent, primarily because of the proximity of these events and the difficulty to reach consensus on how the era of Soviet-imposed communism should be judged, if at all. The monuments and museums devoted to the postwar decades either pay long-due tributes to the victims of the socialist regimes or take on a Disneyesque form and aim at entertaining the viewer. Second, after 1989, the Central European cities bid farewell to the Soviet-imposed reading of the Second World War and started, if painstakingly, revising their pasts. Although countless war memorials had been built in Central Europe during the socialist regime, many of them misinterpreted, belied, or ignored the facts. The fall of communism and the subsequent withdrawal of the Soviet Army created a new opportunity to come to terms with the atrocities of World War II (see Judt 2006). In what follows I discuss the ways in which different pasts have been commemorated in the Central European capitals after 1989 and how the new monuments and museums have influenced urban identities and landscapes.

Berlin is home to several monuments and museums that focus on hitherto silenced aspects of the city's complex postwar history. The emergence of memorials devoted to (East) Berlin's socialist decades was prompted by the re-unification of 1989/1990 and remained “in line with the general memorial obsessions of the 1990s” (Huysen 2003: 52). Importantly, the new memorials focus primarily on the uprising of June 17, 1953, the Wall, the Stasi, and their many victims. The 1953 demonstrations of East Berlin workers were commemorated in West Berlin as early as four days after the brutally repressed events: the large avenue between the Brandenburg Gate and the Siegessäule was renamed *Straße des 17. Juni*. It took nearly five decades to honor the victims of the uprising in the part of town where the protests actually took place. On June 17, 2000, right in front of the former House of Ministries on the corner of Wilhelmstrasse and Leipziger Strasse, a new memorial created by the Berlin artist Wolfgang Ruppel was unveiled: the artwork is an enlarged photograph covered with glass and depicting workers marching forward with their arms linked. Since it is incorporated into the pavement, the monument could have been easily overseen if not for the colorful mural on the façade of the ministry building that Ruppel's piece corresponds to both in its proportion and motif (see Schomaker 2000). Max Linger's propaganda wall painting depicts a crowd of workers cheerfully praising socialism. Remarkably, the mural was unveiled in January 1953, only few months before the East Berlin workers' rebellion. In the words of Germany's former finance minister Hans Eichel, the artworks “juxtapose the real and virtual socialism” and, as such, present a poignant combination (Eichel qtd. in Schomaker 2000: no pagination).

Similarly, the victims of the Wall had been commemorated in West Berlin already during the city's division, but it was only after the collapse of the socialist regime that more elaborate Wall memorials have been erected. Although the Wall has almost completely disappeared from the urban landscape, it is still possible to find original parts of the border installations scattered in the city. The most famous and longest (1.3 km) stretch of the Wall has been preserved in the (Eastern) district of Friedrichshain. In February 1990, over a hundred international artists were invited to cover the grey concrete slabs between the *Oberbaumbrücke* and the *Ostbahnhof* with their own interpretations of the then ongoing system change. The result, known as the East Side Gallery, may (and does) appear confusing to some tourists, who tend to think the graffiti and murals had been painted already during the city's division (as was often the case of the border installations facing West Berlin, but would have been impossible in East Berlin as that part of the Wall was constantly watched by border guards). The Gallery's exposure to changeable weather conditions, traffic, and vandalism has resulted in serious damage of both the artworks and the concrete slabs and, consequently, necessitated a thorough renovation that began in the fall of 2008 as part of the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the Fall of the Wall.

On the tenth anniversary of the Fall of the Wall, the former division of the city was commemorated in three different ways in Bernauer Strasse. Back in August 1961, the street witnessed some of the most dramatic and symbolic scenes from the first chapter of the city's division: the houses on Bernauer Strasse were located in the Soviet sector, but the street was already part of the district of Wedding administered by the French; when the Wall was built, the apartment buildings became part of the border installations with ground- and first-floor windows forcefully bricked up. Archival photographs and films document the escapes of desperate residents jumping out of the windows as well as the subsequent demolition of the borderland houses by East German soldiers. Today, Bernauer Strasse is home to the Berlin Wall Memorial (1998), the Berlin Wall Documentation Center (1999), and the Chapel of Reconciliation (2000). The Berlin Wall Memorial incorporates part of the border installations that survived in Bernauer Strasse: it consists of two concrete walls separated by the death strip and limited on both ends by large steel walls that are polished and smooth as mirrors on the inside (and, thus, symbolize infinity), but rusty on the outside and, as such, reminiscent of the backwardness of the “iron curtain” reality. It was only after years of debates on the “appropriate form and design of commemoration” that the Kohlhoff & Kohlhoff design was accepted as the winning project and even then it continued to arouse dispute: “The memorial is dedicated to ‘the memory of the division of the city from August 13, 1961 to November 9, 1989,’ but following vehement protest from people who had been personally affected by these events and from victim associations, the inscription on the memorial plaque was extended to include the words ‘in memory of the victims of the communist tyranny’” (Gedenkstätte Ber-

liner Mauer 2008: no pagination). Owing to its size, the Berlin Wall Memorial can be seen in its entirety only from above – an opportunity that the upper terrace of the neighboring Documentation Center conveniently provides. The third element of the Bernauer Strasse ensemble, the Chapel of Reconciliation, was built in 2000 in place of the 1894 Evangelical church that – located in the death strip and, thus, considered “Wall property” – had been blown up in 1985 during the renovation of the border installations. Parts of the old staircase and the altarpiece have been incorporated into the chapel while the original church bells hang on the scaffolding outside.

Not far from the Bernauer Strasse ensemble, on Invalidenstrasse, there is another memorial devoted to the former border: it is entitled *Sinkende Mauer* (Sinking Wall) has the form of a tilted rectangular block of concrete disappearing in the ground and calling to mind an iceberg or, more adequately, *Titanic*. The latter association is prompted by the cascades of water flowing down the top edge of the concrete wall. Interestingly, the 1997 monument was also built in place of a church (*Gnadekirche*) razed during the Wall construction works in 1967. Although both Invalidenstrasse and Bernauer Strasse are streets in Berlin's central district of Mitte, they are relatively far from other tourist attractions and, hence, do not attract as many visitors as they may have, had they been located closer to the Reichstag or the Checkpoint Charlie.

Most museums dedicated to the city's former division and the socialist regime focus on the victims of the Wall (e.g., the Berlin Wall Documentation Center, the House at Checkpoint Charlie) and/or the GDR secret police (e.g., the Memorial Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, the Stasi Museum) and, thus, fail to document other aspects of life in East Berlin. Apart from the city and historical museums (*Märkisches Museum* and *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, respectively) that occasionally feature exhibitions on various themes from Berlin's postwar past, the newest attempt at approaching East Berlin's reality – although not exclusively, but rather as part of a larger East German culture – has been the establishment of the DDR Museum at 1 Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse, right across the river from the cathedral (*Berliner Dom*) and across the street from where the Palace of the Republic used to stand. Advertised as “one of the most interactive museums in Europe” (DDR-Museum 2008: no pagination), the exhibition aims first and foremost at entertaining visitors by presenting well-known GDR products such as the *Trabi*, the *Plattenbauten*, the Free German Youth (*FDJ* or *Freie Deutsche Jugend*) uniforms, and the Wall, among many others. The concept and form of the museum are based solely on stereotypes about East Berlin and the GDR. Although on its website the DDR Museum claims to allow for “a hands-on experience of history” and an “opportunity to experience the GDR everyday life yourself” (DDR-Museum 2008: no pagination), it resembles a theme park or a toy store rather than a competent historical exhibition.

Despite its strongly anticommunist policy (especially under mayor – and later Poland's president – Lech Kaczyński, 2002-2005), after 1989 Warsaw has seen only two major monuments devoted to the victims of the communist regime, both focusing on the first postwar decade: the Memorial to the Martyrs of the Communist Terror in Poland 1944-1956 (1993) in Warsaw-Ursynów and the Memorial to the Victims of Stalinism (2001) in Warsaw-Praga. The former, located near the cemetery on Wałbrzyska Street where the *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa* (*UB*, or Office of Security, as the communist secret police in postwar Poland was called) dumped the bodies of their victims, is an ensemble of large rocks with torn prison bars sticking out from one of them and a 10-meter tall iron cross in the back. Both the openly (Catholic) Christian symbolism and the choice of materials (stone and iron) follow the Polish tradition of monuments commemorating victims of communism (e.g., the Memorial to June 1956 Events in Poznań, the Memorial to the Dead Shipyard Workers in Gdansk, the Memorial to the Victims of Communism in Rzeszów). The Warsaw Memorial to the Victims of Stalinism has been heavily criticized as the “ugliest monument in recent years” and dubbed a “bugaboo from Praga” (Urzykowski and Majewski 2005: no pagination): it depicts a man captured between two gigantic walls, his arms are stretched apart – which lends his figure the shape of a cross and corresponds to the cross hanging around his neck – and his head slightly tilted forward as if from exhaustion; from one of his wrists hang prison chains while the other hand is resting on the bars sticking out from the wall. The monument is located on Namysłowska Street, previously home to the infamous “Toledo” prison where between 1944 and 1956 the *UB* and the *NKVD* interrogated, tortured, and kept soldiers of the Polish Home Army and members of independence and conspiracy organizations. Presumably, the monument aims at presenting a victim of the communist regime breaking away from the prison. To many locals, however, the statue resembles a drunkard trying to keep balance by holding on to the walls or a criminal waiting for his victim in a dark alley (see Urzykowski and Majewski 2005).

Warsaw's reluctance to commemorate its postwar past has been also visible in the difficulties, uncertainties, and delays surrounding the establishment of the Museum of Communism. The idea came from filmmaker Andrzej Wajda, satirist Jerzy Kawalerowicz, and architect Czesław Bielecki, who in the late 1990s started the SocLand Foundation and put together a traveling exhibition on communism in Poland. Their hope that the collection would find its home in the basements of the Palace of Culture and Science had been shattered many times for various reasons ranging from architectonic through financial to political. In the summer of 2008, the City of Warsaw re-embraced SocLand's idea, however, not without emphasizing that “locating [the museum] under the Palace is unfeasible as it would necessitate drilling through the fundament, which is technically very difficult. Besides the Palace is a historic building” (Warsaw's mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz qtd. in Urzykowski 2008: no pagination).

Commemorating the Victims of World War II

Andreas Huyssen repeats after Robert Musil's that "there is nothing as invisible as a monument" and concludes that the "memorial-crazed" Berlin clearly opts out for invisibility: the more monuments there are, the more the past becomes invisible, and the easier it is to forget: "redemption, thus, through forgetting" (Huyssen 2003: 32). Still, it is important to remember that after 1989 Berlin – as well as other Central European cities – had no chance but to rethink their commemoration practices in regard to the Second World War and the Holocaust. In the postwar decades the city built only few monuments related to its Nazi past. Aside from the mentioned Soviet war memorials and a few monuments devoted to the communist victims of Hitler's regime in East Berlin, only three other memorials in (West) Berlin attempted to thematize some of the aspects of World War II: the German Resistance Memorial on Stauffenbergstrasse (1953), the Topography of Terror (1987) on the grounds of the former Gestapo headquarters, and the information center in the House of the Wannsee Conference (initiated in 1987, but opened five years later), where the "Final Solution" was officially agreed on in January 1942. As German historian Götz Aly was right to observe in 2005, "Berlin's so-called memorial landscape [left] all the central questions unanswered" (Aly 2005: no pagination). Aly criticized not only the lack of thematic and organizational connection between the museums of terror, resistance, and persecution, but also their "mustiness and hostility to innovation", stating bluntly that "they have become museums to themselves" (Aly 2005: no pagination).

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe that opened on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War started a new trend in the commemoration practices in Berlin. The idea for the memorial surfaced as early as 1988, however, it was not until the reunification and the relocation of the federal government to Berlin that the project became "the subject of a fundamental debate concerning German people's historical self-awareness at the end of the 20th century" (Stiftung Denkmal 2008: no pagination). The unprecedented dispute aroused countless controversies and went on for over a decade before the parliament was able to pass a resolution that gave a green light to the construction of the memorial. The Bundestag chose Peter Eisenman's monumental design as the winning project, but stressed that the memorial "cannot replace the historical sites of terror where atrocities were committed" (Stiftung Denkmal 2008: no pagination). Furthermore, the resolution explicates what the parliament intend to achieve with the memorial, namely to "honour the murdered victims, keep alive the memory of these inconceivable events in German history, and admonish all future generations never again to violate human rights, to defend the democratic constitutional state at all times, to secure equality before the law for all people and to resist all forms of dictatorship and regimes based on violence" (Stiftung Denkmal 2008: no pagination). Whereas the intentions behind the project have been clearly expressed, the memorial itself continues to provoke controversy, confusion, and criticism.

Spread over 19,000 square meters (or the size of two Bundesliga football fields, as it is often explained in the media and Berlin guide books), the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe consists of 2,711 concrete slabs that vary in height and angle. Neither the number nor the shape of the stelae intentionally possess any symbolic value because, in the words of New York architect Peter Eisenman, “the enormity and scale of the horror of the Holocaust is such that any attempt to represent it by traditional means is inevitably inadequate” (Eisenman qtd. in Stiftung Denkmal 2008: no pagination). Instead, the memorial “attempts to present a new idea of memory as distinct from nostalgia” (Eisenman qtd. in Stiftung Denkmal 2008: no pagination). Whereas the intention behind the memorial may be unclear to those unfamiliar with its political and artistic background, the Information Center located underground provides information on the history of the Holocaust. The museum consists of several rooms that correspond architectonically to the memorial and incorporate various audiovisual techniques to convey the complex themes. Importantly, the exhibition relies not only on academic texts and original letters and photographs, but also includes video and audio recordings of testimonies by Holocaust survivors. The Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe has been also entrusted with supervision of the Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime (2008), the Memorial to the Murdered Sinti and Roma (scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009) and, together with the Topography of Terror, the “Gray Buses” Memorial devoted to the victims of the Nazi-imposed “euthanasia” (2006-2008). Sadly, in August 2008, merely three months after the Homosexuals Memorial was unveiled, unknown offenders smashed the viewing window that is part of the cube-shaped artwork and through which visitors normally can see the film showing two kissing men. Survivors, gay activists, and Berlin's (openly gay) mayor Klaus Wowereit voiced their concern over the incident.

One of the first remarkable monuments to appear in the city after 1989 was the Book Burning Memorial on *Bebelplatz* that opened in 1995. Designed by Israeli artist Micha Ullman, the memorial is located precisely on the square where on May 10, 1933, members of the SA and the SS, together with students and professors of the nearby Humboldt University, burned thousands of books by authors considered “un-German” such as, for example, Sigmund Freud, Heinrich Mann, Karl Marx, and Kurt Tucholsky. The major part of Ullman's artwork is underground and can be seen through the glass plate incorporated into the cobbled-stoned square: the inside of the memorial shows empty brightly lit bookshelves. The second part of the memorial is located several meters away and consists solely of a bronze plate immersed in the pavement with a quotation from Heinrich Heine dated 1821 prophetically pronouncing “Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen” (Where they burn books, they will also, in the end, burn human beings). Up to date, Ullman's underground library remains one of Berlin's most subtle memorials and, as such, speaks against Huyssen's

claim that “the notion of the monument as memorial or commemorative public event has witnessed a triumphal return” (Huysen 2003: 31).

In Warsaw, many World War II monuments had been built already under the socialist regime: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorials (1946 and 1948), the Nike Monument to the Heroes of Warsaw (1964), the Little Insurgent's Monument (1983), the Umschlagplatz Monument (1988), and the Warsaw Uprising Monument (1989), among others. Still, because of the Soviet-imposed interpretations of history that were in force throughout the postwar decades, certain events and organizations of the Second World War – such as the Polish anti-Soviet partisan movement, the Battle of Monte Cassino, and the deportations of Polish civilians and soldiers to Russia – were allowed to be commemorated only after 1989. Remarkably, the Monument to the Fallen and the Murdered in the East was one of the first war memorials to open in Warsaw after the fall of the socialist regime. The monumental bronze structure includes railway tracks and a train carriage (reminiscent of those the Soviets used for deportations) filled with religious symbols: predominantly Roman-Catholic crosses, but also some Orthodox Christian crosses, Stars of David, and Islamic crescents, which reminds of the multiethnic and multireligious character of the former East Poland. The tracks are inscribed with the names of the cities and towns from which then Polish citizens were forced out (Grodno, Wilno, Białystok, Brześć, Pińsk, among others) as well as the names of the Siberian deportation and labor camps where they were delivered (Krasnoyarsk, Yakutsk, Irkutsk, etc.) Symbolically, the monument was unveiled on September 17, 1995 – an anniversary of the Soviet invasion on Poland, which had been unspoken of under the socialist regime.

Another tragic event that had been mostly ignored or downplayed by the local and state authorities before 1989 was the Warsaw Uprising of 1944: an enthusiastic patriotic rebellion against the German occupant that led not only to the murdering of an enormous part of the young Polish intelligentsia, but also to the complete destruction of the city. While the Warsaw insurgents and civilians alike were slaughtered by the German troops, the Red Army stood waiting on the other bank of the Vistula river, waiting for the city and its people to perish (see Davies 2006). Naturally then, the Soviet-imposed regime was not keen on commemorating the uprising in the postwar decades. After 1989, dozens of monuments, plaques, and street names devoted to the uprising appeared in the city. Moreover, each anniversary of the uprising is elaborately commemorated not only in Warsaw, but also in the rest of the country.

The Warsaw Uprising became particularly celebrated under mayor Lech Kaczyński. The Warsaw Rising Museum opened on the sixtieth anniversary of the insurrection; its goal is not only to conduct teaching and research, but also to “integrate veterans’ and military circles and educate youth in the spirit of patriotism and respect for national traditions” (Warsaw Rising Museum 2005: no pagination – it is unclear why the official English name of the museum features the word

“rising” instead of “uprising”). The patriotic education and commemoration of the victims dominate the concept of the multimedia exhibition, which focuses on the determination, idealism, and suffering of the insurgents and Warsaw civilians alike. The museum is well integrated with the city: apart from constant cooperation with schools, historical institutes, and veteran associations, it initiates various entertainment and educational mass events for the residents of Warsaw.

Another important part of the elaborate commemorations on the sixtieth anniversary of the insurrection was the renaming of the *Kopiec Czerniakowski* (Czeraniakowski Mound). The mound in the district of Mokotów was created from the rubbles and ashes of destroyed Warsaw: fragments of buildings, bricks, roof tiles – some of them mostly likely containing human remains – were piled up together in 1946-50 in an attempt to create a pantheon for those who died during the uprising (Warsaw Municipality 2008). For decades, the mound remained neglected and it was not until 1994 that the Home Army veterans initiated a monument on the top of the hill: a 15-meter tall symbol of the “Fighting Poland,” the so-called *kotwica* (or anchor). In 2004, when the mound was renamed in honor of the Warsaw Uprising, 400 steps and 40 landings (thus, symbolizing the year 1944) were added constructed to make it easier for visitors to climb uphill.

Whereas outside of Poland the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 is often confused with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943, in the Warsaw urban landscape the differences between the two are clearly marked and commemorated through separate memorials. Importantly, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorials (1946 and 1948) were among the first to appear in postwar Warsaw. The Museum of the History of Polish Jews is scheduled to open on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto in 2011. The “multimedia narrative museum and cultural center” – as its creators describe it – “will be a unique institution,” primarily because to date there is no other museum that focuses on the history of Polish Jews (Museum of the History of Polish Jews 2008: no pagination). The museum, which expects 450,000 visitors a year, is directed primarily at Jewish visitors from Israel, the United States, and Europe as well as Polish visitors, who “will discover that the history of Poland is not complete without a history of Polish Jews” (Museum of the History of Polish Jews 2008: no pagination). The curators ambitiously aim at demonstrating that “being a Jew in Poland was not limited to being a Holocaust victim” (Museum of the History of Polish Jews 2008: no pagination).

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews is likely to resemble – both when it comes to the content and form of the planned exhibition – the Jewish Museum in Berlin located in Daniel Libeskind's world famous building. The exhibition on the history of German Jews opened on September 11, 2001 and had to be immediately closed for a few days in fear of terrorist attacks. The building has the form of a zig-zag and contains numerous voids that refer to “that which can never be exhibited when it comes to Jewish Berlin history: humanity reduced to ashes” (Libeskind qtd. in Jewish Museum Berlin 2008: no pagination). These aspects of

history that can be represented are exhibited along three axes: the Axis of Emigration that leads outside the building to the Garden of Exile, the Axis of the Holocaust that ends in the Holocaust Tower, and the Axis of Continuity that leads to the exhibition. Whereas the exhibition itself tells the history of German Jews in a rather conventional way, Libeskind's architecture, his use of light and air, the surprising angles of the walls, the heaviness and lightness of the used materials, among other devices, create an opportunity to “sense” the fate of German Jews and, thus, learn about it through empathy and imagination rather than through curatorial texts. Andreas Huyssen is among many to praise the Jewish Museum for its uniqueness and insightful consideration of Berlin's urban landscape and history: “Libeskind’s museum is the only project in the current Berlin building boom that explicitly articulates issues of national and local history in ways pertinent to post-unification Germany” (Huyssen 2003: 71).

Conclusion

The post-1989 urban identities of Berlin and Warsaw are (re)shaped by the cities' obsession with history coupled with their often uncritical willingness to absorb new, mostly corporate-driven, architecture. The remnants of the socialist past such as prefabricated apartment blocks exist side by side with modern office buildings and brand-new war memorials, thus, creating a fragmented as well as aesthetically and historically diverse urban landscape. The inescapable juxtaposition of the pre- and post-1989 elements creates surprising and ambivalently symbolic combinations such as the fake Statue of Liberty sitting on top of the former East Berlin watchtower (Huyssen 2003: 53) or the monumental McDonald's restaurant overlooking the neighboring Palace of Cultures and Science. One of the reasons why cultural differences between the East and the West – or between the defeated communist system and the victorious capitalist order – are so poignantly visible in Berlin and Warsaw is because of the war destructions. Whereas Budapest and Prague, for example, were able to keep large parts of their urban landscapes intact and, thus, preserve many elements of their long urban histories, Berlin and Warsaw had to be thoroughly rebuilt and, given the political situation, they had to follow the imposed image of what a city should look like; therefore, Berlin and Warsaw had to reinvent themselves in 1945 and then again 1989, which has led to spatial confusion, countless architectonic and aesthetic hybrids, and a specific obsession with cultural heritage and its commemoration.

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<http://www.weimarpolis.net/docs/volume1/issue1/Lis_Full_Article.pdf> (2009) and, with Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, „Intermediality and Cyber Virtualities of Central European Cities” in *Real and Virtual Cities: Intertextual and Intermedial Mindscapes* (2009). Lisiak resides in Berlin where she works as an independent curator and project coordinator.

Notes

- 1 Alt-Landsberg and Eberswalde are towns in Brandenburg, Danzig is the German name of the Polish (and previously German) city Gdańsk; Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949) was a Bulgarian communist.
- 2 Marcełi Nowotko (1893–1942) was a Polish communist politician, Karol Świerczewski (1897–1947) was a Polish general in the Red Army, Władysław Anders (1892–1970) was a general in the Polish Army before and during World War II and later a member of the Polish government in exile in London.

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City of Epitaphs

By Megan Hicks

Abstract

The pavement lies like a ledger-stone on a tomb. Buried underneath are the remains of fertile landscapes and the life they once supported. Inscribed on its upper side are epitaphic writings. Whatever their ostensible purpose, memorial plaques and public artworks embedded in the pavement are ultimately expressions of civic bereavement and guilt. The pavement's role as both witness and accomplice to fatality is confirmed by private individuals who publicize their grief with death notices graffitied on the asphalt. To walk the city is to engage in a dialogue about death.

Keywords: Cities, pavement, memorials, public art, shrines, graffiti, Sydney

City of Epitaphs

Nothing exists except by virtue of a disequilibrium, an injustice. All existence is a theft paid for by other existences; no life flowers except on a cemetery.

Remy de Gourmont
1899

Green fields

I am visiting a colleague who works at Macarthur, on the south-western fringes of Sydney. At lunchtime we go for a walk. The landscape here is undulating and a grey concrete path links the university and the technical institute to the railway station. It curves across a wide, grassy recreation area that was once agricultural land established in the early days of the colony. Near the top of the rise – where the path becomes a footbridge over both the railway line and a creek-bed overgrown with saplings and bent shopping trolleys – neat inscriptions in black felt-tipped pen decorate the edges of the concrete. Alongside various jokes and romantic messages there are some dedicated to “Alex 1993-2008”: “Rest in Peace ... Your our angel ... I miss u so much babe!”



Figure 1: *Rest in peace Alex!*, Macarthur, NSW, near the railway station.

On the opposite side of the station there is a shopping square, with a fountain, outdoor eating areas and café umbrellas. It is paved with synthetic granite tiles in geometric patterns, and set into these are long metal plaques carrying quotations cast in shining brass. “all the paspalum everywhere that would stick to your legs”, they read, “driving home with the sun setting in your eyes”, and “It was my father’s, and my father’s father’s, before that”.

I take photographs of all these things because I am interested in footpaths and roadways, plazas and parking lots. I habitually study their surfaces; I record any writing I find there; I am looking for revelations about the city. Gradually I am learning how the role of the pavement transcends mere functionality. And here in Macarthur, this green-field-development-becoming-a-city, I find evidence of something I have already suspected.

Now I revisit my photographs of other inscriptions, taken in different places, and I search through them for confirmation. This is what I have discovered – that the pavement is an active participant in city rituals of sacrifice, mourning, remembrance and guilt.¹

Death sentences

To begin with, the pavement itself is an inscription, the script for a morbid ceremony performed at the formation of a city. This is apparent on development estates like Macarthur, where roads, kerbs and gutters precede other construction works. The interlocking strokes and loops of streets and cul-de-sacs form giant characters imprinted on the otherwise bare land. Translated, this lettering spells out sentences like “The pastures here have been flattened and the livestock removed. The orchards that once grew at this place have been felled. The woodland that covered these hills has been bulldozed.”

Two centuries ago, the formation of Sydney-town preceded any formal survey. Its layout was determined by the course of a little stream running into a cove of the harbour, around which the initial dwellings were clustered. But within a short time, the valley and its sandstone ledges would be branded by the same surveyor’s gridiron that was to mark the site of Melbourne and of other frontier towns of the New World. A seal impressed on the living landscape, the grid signified civilisation’s appropriation of wild regions.²

Burial

As Sydney developed from a town into a city, the Tank Stream would be covered over, becoming a stormwater drain and sometime sewer, running below the streets. Sydney Cove would be filled in and a semi-circular quay would be built in its place. By the late 20th century civic embellishments would see the original shoreline of the cove commemorated by an irregular arc of decorative brass studs set into the paving surrounding the quay. The course of the stream would be

marked by a series of glass and stainless steel pavement artworks, inscribed with quotations from the journal of First Fleeter, Captain Watkin Tench.³

On the streets themselves, footways would be paved with flagstones, and later the carriageways would be surfaced with woodblocks. Over time these materials would be replaced by asphalt, concrete and smart bluestone flagging. Beneath the paving lie sandy inlets, reclaimed marshes, hewn trees, trampled wildflowers, and the remains of exterminated animals. Beside these covered remains there also lie middens, rock carvings and other vestiges of the lives of Indigenous people, left behind as those people were driven away.⁴ All sacrificed in the name of progress.

In the 1890s workmen repairing a city street would dig up a paving slab and find it to be the gravestone of Boatsman George Graves, who had been a crew member of the First-Fleet ship the Sirius, and who had died in 1788.⁵ In 1936 road works would uncover an ironbark pile from a bridge built over the Tank Stream in 1802.⁶ These are just some of the archaeological relics revealed by re-paving.

The making and maintenance of streets and footpaths in a city is a process of burial, disinterment and re-burial. The pavement is the ledger stone on a tomb.

Civic monuments

In graveyards we are accustomed to looking downwards to read because, among the standing headstones there are also horizontal slabs of stone or marble. We must bend over to study the life and death details inscribed on these ledger stones. It is the same in lawn cemeteries. As we walk the rows we bow our heads to read the plaques at our feet.

On city streets civic authorities, recognizing the tomb-like qualities of the pavement, have transposed the tradition of the funereal inscription from cemetery rows to cement sidewalks. So, although our eyes are generally drawn to shop windows, tall buildings and vertically mounted signs and advertisements, if we instead glance downwards we will find death notices beneath our feet. Memorial plaques and pavement installations in the city, whether miniature monuments, digests of historical information for tourists, or commissioned public artworks, are epitaphic. They have turned the pavement-as-ledger into a roll call of lost lives.

Let me offer some examples. Occasionally small memorial plaques are fixed to the pavement. These mark the association of a particular place with a local identity, a demolished building, a past event. Inconspicuously tucked against walls, they are probably only noticed by the most committed of pavement readers. Whatever the motivations and machinations that resulted in the production of any particular plaque, commemorative obligations are often discharged at the time of its laying.⁷

But not all memorial plaques are licenses to forget. One exception is located in Newtown, on the fashionable *inner* fringes of Sydney. Syd "Black Santa" Cunningham was a philanthropist who used to sit outside the Woolworths supermarket collecting money and toys for rural children.⁸ After he died in 1999 a bronze plaque was installed at the spot where he set up his folding table, complete with a depiction of his plastic money bucket. Syd's plaque has since become the focal point for beggars who keep his memory alive by collecting for themselves.



Figure 2: Syd (Doc) Cunningham ... *Black Santa* plaque, King Street, Newtown, NSW.

The existence of such beggars is made more poignant by a set of five municipal footpath mosaics just around the corner in Church Street, all but one representing local churches in ceramic words and pictures. In essence, the four religious works memorialise the dead, whether victims of a shipwreck buried in St Stephen's churchyard, or Baptists who are "Buried with Christ" and "Risen with Christ". The incongruous fifth mosaic is a gaudy representation of two lizards in the style of "Aboriginal art". Intended as a gesture of inclusion, it is supposed to acknowledge the original inhabitants of the district. Instead, it further marginalises Aboriginal people by committing them to the ground amongst the dead memorialised on the other mosaics.

Unlike small memorial plaques, pavement installations commissioned by city authorities are intentionally conspicuous, but whether their ostensible purpose is to provoke reflection, historical awareness, congratulation or admiration, the ultimate effect is the same. Wittingly or unwittingly, they are all obituaries.

Such is the case with the Writers Walk on the promenade at Circular Quay, the tourist precinct where day trippers catch ferries across Sydney Harbour. The stated purpose of this series of plaques is to demonstrate the "evolutionary process [that] continues to channel the thoughts and perceptions, the hopes and the fears of writers who have known this great city and its people".⁹ Perceptions of the

lapidary beauty of the harbour recur on this trail of quotes from prominent authors past and present: “In Sydney Harbour ... the yachts will be racing on the crushed diamond water under a sky the texture of powdered sapphires ...”.¹⁰

But there are also regrets for the loss of some imagined innocence of spirit from the early days and, not coincidentally, latter-day expressions of remorse for the treatment of Indigenous people: “Sydney ... was populated by leisured multitudes all in their short-sleeves and all picnicking all the day ...”¹¹, “I am born of the conquerors, you of the persecuted ...”¹², “... Until a treaty is agreed with the original inhabitants, I shall be homeless in the world”¹³.



Figure 3: *Jack London ... I would rather be ashes than dust*, Writers Walk, Circular Quay, Sydney, NSW.

Here on the walkway at Circular Quay – and also in Kings Cross, where one hundred plaques eulogise that quarter of the city for its retrospective reputation as a bohemian and "colourful" place – bereavement for lives lost or left behind is the underlying theme, and the literary quotation is the secular equivalent of a reading from the scriptures.

In other pavement artworks, transcribed fragments of all-but-lost Indigenous Language substitute for the literary quote. There is such an installation beside the wall that separates Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens from the harbour. In it "figures from Sydney rock carvings – some of which no longer exist – are depicted in terrazzo and stained concrete ... [and] along the kerb, the names of women, men, places, animals, tools and rituals from the many Indigenous clans in the Sydney area are etched in red".¹⁴



Figure 4: Part of the *Wuganmagulya* pathway installation, Farm Cove, Sydney, NSW.

There is a comparable sculpture across the harbour at Manly Wharf, where the ferries from Circular Quay arrive. Radially arranged stainless steel plaques introduce seaside holiday-makers to Manly's municipal self-image, with references to decommissioned ferries and dead historical figures.¹⁵ In a section of the sculpture that depicts now marginalised or invisible flora and fauna – the latter including “local clans (1788)” – rock-art motifs have once again been appropriated for public art. And once again, these “Aboriginal” pictures are accompanied by nouns salvaged from the debris of European contact.



Figure 5: *darangarra ... cabbage tree*, part of the *Shell* installation, Manly Wharf, NSW.

Mortality

Sydney is not the only city where official decorations on the ground have an elegiac quality. Around the world, either deliberately or unconsciously, civic plazas, community mosaics, commemorative plaques, and interactive light installations mark the passing of previous existences. But in Sydney especially, the epitaph is a persistent feature of the pavement.

Reproduced on one of the "Writers Walk" plaques at Circular Quay is the quote: "The majesties of nature and the monstrosities of man have a cheek by jowl evidence in Sydney more insistent, I think, than in any other city in the world".¹⁶ The beaches, the harbour, the remnants of natural bush are unavoidable reminders of what else has been destroyed by the city's spread. It is guilt that drives civic authorities and commercial interests to memorialise on the pavement what the pavement itself has obliterated. Often praised or condemned by more sober cities for the fun-loving or shallow-minded lifestyle of its citizens, Sydney is in fact haunted by death.

It is significant that this city should have adopted as its motto the one-word sermon of an eccentric evangelist who chalked his message on its footpaths for 30 years. That iconic word, "Eternity", flashed on the Harbour Bridge in 2000 Olympic fireworks displays, and now preserved in stainless steel on the pavement of Town Hall Square, offers the hope of redemption but only by calling attention to the certainty of death.¹⁷

Figure 6: *Eternity*, Town Hall Square, Sydney, NSW.



Public mourning

The role the pavement plays as tomb or cenotaph is continuous. The events commemorated on its surface may be distant in time or recent. In the city, public death is always a possibility and the pavement can be both witness and accomplice to fatality. We are reminded of this by the marks and stains that daily appear on the pavement's surface – stencilled body-outlines at danger spots warning pedestrians to "Cross carefully", dreadful skid marks at intersections, spray-painted symbols where police have marked out accident sites, and perhaps even splashes of blood on cement or asphalt.

These marks extend to death notices posted by mourners after someone has died unexpectedly. With spray cans, chalk and felt-tipped pens, their private anguish is made a matter of public announcement. It is evident that the pavement's epitaphic inscriptions are not only cast by commissioned artists – they are also scrawled by amateur graffitiists who deliberately choose the pavement as their noticeboard.

Sometimes I have been able to learn the stories behind these public-private memorials. A few years ago, for example, a temporary shrine for Edison Berrio appeared in Sydney's central business district near the place where he had been shot twelve months earlier. Suspecting him of theft, police had surrounded and fired on him before he could get out of his car. Angry at official inaction, Edison's friends held a vigil on the anniversary of his death.¹⁸ They tied flowers to a tree and wrote messages on the asphalt: "Rest in peace Edison", they chalked, "Cops kill ... No justice!". For several days the incongruously large letters chalked across the footpath drew the attention of office workers, reminding them of the unresolved fatality that had happened so close to the district's legal offices and courthouses.



Figure 7: RIP Edi ... Cops kill ... Rest in peace Edison,
King Street, Sydney, NSW.

A different kind of graffiti memorial, but with similar political intent, was chalked on Newtown's shopping strip after teenager TJ Hickey died. A few kilometres away TJ had been impaled on a fence as a police car followed his bicycle.¹⁹ A protest riot broke out in Redfern, a largely Aboriginal suburb, and body outlines were drawn on Newtown footpaths, where local social activists would see them. Slogans written beside the body shapes read "Stop racist police brutality ... Cops kill children ... To kill an Aboriginal is to kill history".²⁰



Figure 8: *To kill an Aboriginal is to kill history*, King Street, Newtown, NSW.

Less ephemeral was an unofficial plaque fixed to the asphalt at another spot in Newtown's main street. It lasted some years until the footpath was resurfaced with synthetic granite pavers. Just two words were engraved on this small oval sign, "Alison Gooch". It marked the spot where Alison had been killed early one morning when a car mounted the kerb and struck her as she was walking by the shops.²¹

And again in Newtown, a district renowned for its wall art, one of the most enduring pieces of graffiti is a floral tribute, not on a wall but on a busy traffic island. The flowers were painted under the direction of Kathy Jones during a day-long "Reclaim the streets" demonstration. Kathy was an artist and social activist who worked with disadvantaged people in the Newtown area. When she died a few months after the protest party her friends turned the island into a memorial, reasoning that she would have wanted local people to know why she wasn't around any more. They cleaned what remained of the pavement artwork and coated it with marine varnish, and they taped a notice with her photograph to a light pole.²² Years later the flowers are only now beginning to seriously fade.



Figure 9: Flowers, King Street, Newtown, NSW.

Death notices and spontaneous shrines appear on the ground in other parts of the city.²³ If I have not written about them here it is because I have not yet found out their background stories. But it is clear that when mourners use the pavement to publicize their grief it is not simply because asphalt is a conveniently blank slate to scribble on. They choose the pavement for their graffiti because of its active role in the fatality or its aftermath. It is the site of that very public death (a city street, a suburban footpath); it is the conveyance that bore the vehicles involved (the cars, the bicycle, the police vehicles); it is the footway where members of a particular audience will pass by (the legal workers, the activists and

street people); it was once significant to the person who has died (the contested ground over which Reclaim the Street protestors struggled).

Or it holds importance, not for the death event or the deceased, but for the mourners themselves. Those felt-tip farewells in the sub-city of Macarthur were for former local teenager Alex Wildman. Alex had moved with his family to a distant country town, but committed suicide after being bullied at his new school.²⁴ Denied the chance to attend his funeral so far away, his former classmates must have met on that footpath near the railway station to share their feelings. Judging from other graffiti on this pavement-over-a-paddock, it is a favourite place for teenagers to sit around and talk. It would have been natural for them to choose this spot to write their epitaphs for Alex.

Passage

Without the pavement there is no city. It both suppresses life and supports it. It is a durable slab that barely contains the dead, and its epitaphian inscriptions are a constant admonishment to the living.

Far from being a passive backdrop, the pavement is an active player in the drama that is the city. The symbolic importance of its role is appreciated by civic authorities who know that its appearance is a reflection of the city's self-image.

When Sydney was preparing for the 2000 Olympics, central city streets were resurfaced, kerbs rebuilt, asphalt footways replaced with bluestone flagging. A series of sculptures was commissioned, several of them embedded horizontally in the pedestrian precincts of the city, the airport and the Olympic site. Reviewing this bloom of public installations, art analyst Susan Best noted her approval of those that engaged with the history of their site, remarking that "because many of the artists involved in these recent programs work with the space of installation itself, their work is most effective when it can enter into a dialogue with the surrounding space".²⁵ Indeed. Except that, with pavement inscriptions, there is no "when" or "if". The pavement and the tracings upon it, from commissioned art to spontaneous graffiti, *always* enter into a dialogue with the surrounding space. Nor is that dialogue only between the pavement and its locale – the people passing by are included in the dialogue as well.

The pavement, the place, and the people of the city are engaged in a conversation, and the overriding topic of that conversation is death.

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Notes

- 1 This essay is dedicated to Noel Sanders, formerly of the University of Technology Sydney, who showed me how to see dead people.
- 2 Brown-May (1998: xxiii, 1-3) refers to 'the gridiron pattern of the surveyor' that preceded Melbourne and other frontier towns, and discusses the symbolism of the grid. Johnson (2008: 28-31) describes how the plan for Sydney was a grid layout, pre-prepared in England and imbued with septic symbolism, superimposed on the slopes of Sydney Cove.
- 3 *Tankstream - Into the head of the cove* by artist Lynne Roberts-Goodwin, described in *City of Sydney* (2005).
- 4 Woodford (2008: 55-56) writes: 'Underneath your shoes, past the asphalt, concrete and ruins of buried colonial and twentieth century buildings lies a place called Weerong ... From a few holes under one building have come a thousand stone artefacts. The implication is that under the whole of the central business district it is likely that a treasure trove of Sydney's prehistory is entombed'.
- 5 Howard (1984: 12).
- 6 Powerhouse Museum collection D10331 (Sydney).
- 7 Murray (2008:150) mentions how understandings of cultural history can be enhanced by knowing the story behind the erection of particular official memorials. She also asks whether the commemorative process of installing a memorial or plaque becomes "a self-fulfilling prophecy, externalising the memory so it can be forgotten".
- 8 Jopson (1999).
- 9 *Writers Walk* plaque, Circular Quay East, Sydney.
- 10 Clive James, *Unreliable memoirs* (1980), quoted on *Writers Walk* plaque, Circular Quay, Sydney.
- 11 Rudyard Kipling, *Something of myself* (1937), quoted on *Writers Walk* plaque, Circular Quay East, Sydney.
- 12 Judith Wright, *Two dreamtimes* (1973), quoted on *Writers Walk* plaque, Circular Quay, Sydney.
- 13 Germaine Greer, *Journal of the plague year* (1988), quoted on *Writers Walk* plaque, Circular Quay, Sydney.
- 14 *Wuganmagulya (Farm Cove)* by Aboriginal artist Brenda L. Croft, described in *City of Sydney* (2005).
- 15 These plaques are associated with the mist sculpture *Shell* by Urban Art Projects, described by Manly Council Public Art Committee (2006).
- 16 George Johnston, *Clean straw for nothing* (1969), quoted on *Writers Walk* plaque, Circular Quay East, Sydney.
- 17 For discussion of Arthur Stace and his 'Eternity' inscription see, for example, Kirkpatrick (1997) and Hicks (2006).
- 18 Anonymous (2001) and articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and other Sydney newspapers, 2000 and 2001.
- 19 Anonymous (2004) and articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and other Sydney newspapers, February-March 2004.
- 20 I speculate on the use of 'crime scene' body outlines in protest demonstrations in Hicks (2009).
- 21 Anonymous (1996).
- 22 Lisa Jackson Pulver and Mark Jackson Pulver, pers.comm. 2009.
- 23 Santino (2005: 5ff) coined the term 'spontaneous shrines' for public memorials erected by mourners after a sudden or shocking death, and pointed out the political nature of these shrines.
- 24 McDougall (2008) and articles in this and other Sydney newspapers, July-August 2008.
- 25 Best (2000).

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